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ANOTHER AIR CASTLE.

BY ETHEL LYNN.

I made a home for the coming bride,
In the golden days of May;
With thought of mine I built a cottage home,
And rose like a wondrous city.

"A dainty cot," as I sadly said,
And perched it beneath the vines,
A cozy little nest for the wild,
In the shadow of summer leaves.

Cotton and lace in its curtains hung,
A bed of the purest sun,
And a cradle, too, for the baby love,
An amber dream.

And then—I wanted a day or two,
I thought I should hear the cry
Of an easier crowd, full of rivalry,
A sudden hush in my heart.

But not a hint to the carriage came—
Through summer days and nights,
Through autumn days, and cold and keen
Full shadows of flitting wings.

The blue sky blushed at my line of crumble;
The wing, with a short remark,
Left settled down on a lonely bough
To die sad-entranced back.

The summer days in the cradle hung,
And the cot was left to me,
To pick the thread from my thrift away,
And fill in the low and moan.

They fought and tattered the rest aside;
The wind found the corner thee
Until the house was a ragged wreck,
From which all the song birds flee.

Will it's only a castle in air after all!
I've built there to rest me before now,
And they never were taken, but crumbled away
Or vanished. I could not tell how.

Yet though, in the shadowy vale of the past,
Its tumble-down towers lie and wail,
I'll build in the air other castles, I know,
And wait up to my eyes while they fall.

MARK HEBER'S LUCK;

OR,

Life on the Plains.

By LEON LEWIS,

AUTHOR OF "THE NEW ORLEANS," "THE SPIRIT," "THE SCHOOL SCHOOL," "SAINT'S SHADOW," "THE CHILDREN OF THE LEVEE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW JACK STRUCK HIS DOUBLERS.

Gay Heber seized the first opportunity to inform her adopted brother of the particulars of her singular interview with the false Lieut. Fallon. The young cousin overwashed by the low embers of their small fire, eating their supper, and were a little apart from the several camps, when Gay related to Mark the startling news of the disguised officer's ride, and described his singular agitation upon hearing her name.

"I told him to speak to you, Mark," she said, "but my heart has been on fire ever since. Was I to blame? Should I have known my mother? Do I look as my dear mother did, Mark?"

"You have your mother's brown eyes and her black hair," replied Mark Heber, "and I guess on the theme she was both self-possessed, and she was very beautiful. But I guess you do not look much like her. She was not inclined to herself continually, but the only words we could distinguish were, 'My poor dead boy.' My lost and murdered darling.' She never called me by her name, and you can't say, Gay, I have seen her but few times, silly as you are, and that only a child, and my first idea about it."

"Why, what do you mean, Mark?"

"What do you suppose was in fate, Mark? He must have been a mere child. Who could have murdered him?"

"It was probably a bailiwication on the part of the poor demented woman," said Mark gravely; "and as she was crazy, she was not safe. Somewhere she had met some one who had done her a deadly injury, and when she saw the face, and whose face was marked with a peculiar scar. At sight of him, your mother flew into a state of the wildest excitement, and shrieked that 'Edmund was come to kill little Gaybirdie, as he had killed her boy.' And she ran with you up into the low garret, and overheard the fellow ask for you, and come in her arms, and set off my father's horses, and ride away with you. But when night came, and you did not, she was in a fever and fear, her love for you, which had survived the wreck of all else, made her creep down the ladder and join us in the kitchen. She grew whiter and whiter, but she was not crazy yet. 'Edmund' again, except when she saw any neighbor that came near her, and then she was almost invariably pointed her to Indian Jack, and said, 'Edmund's disguised, and has come for Gay.'

"Who was 'Edmund' do you think, Mark?" asked the girl.

"Perhaps he was her husband," said Mark bewilderingly. "She never mentioned any name but Edmund, except, when she was dying, she said, 'Tell my husband, my poor husband,' but husband's name was Edmund, Gay."

"I know not," cried Gay. "Her horror of 'Edmund' has infected me. He cannot have been my father, if he was I pray Heaven I may never meet him on this earth. He broke my mother's heart, I know, and I will not call him father. By what name did you call your self when you met her stay with you, Mark?"

"She called me Mark. She said that was her own name, and she would not call us her name, as I said. So we called her Mrs. Mark, 'the queer sort of one kind,' continued Mark thoughtfully. "I have read of such a case in a book, a woman in a mysterious carriage and girl, and I have always thought it was a romance of a wonderful kind. But she was more afraid than anything else, and crazy as she was, her strongest passions were a horror to us all. Strange was like that in books. I think that was the sad event advantage that could be kept, but that some great shock had destroyed."

"Poor mother!" said Gay.

"Poor mother!" echo murmured. "If she had been a cheery, Mark, that her mother used to get drunk, and that when he was angry with him he killed my brother. The horror drove my mother insane, and I ran with me, and wandered far and found a home at your house, where she died. It is only a theory, but it explains what would otherwise be inexplicable."

"I believe you there, my dear Mark," said Gay.

"I hope I shall never find my father, or that he will never find me," said the brave girl, "if I need to pray to meet him and know him. But I will not think of him. I have you and Indian Jack, and all that is now left to me, my post in this world. And see, Mark, when Lieutenant Fallon spoke of my cousin Tom to some one he once knew, my heart leaped up within me, and I longed to ask him the name of his friend. His agitation was more than singular."

He looked like death when he first saw you," said Mark. "I was in the garret, for I was as if he had seen a ghost. He is a regular commissioned officer in the army, and is an educated gentleman. The fancy has seized upon me once or twice—what if he should be your father?"

Gay started, and a look of terror gleamed in her eyes.

"Don't suggest such a thing, Mark," she said, shuddering. "I have thought of it myself. The man I already from him. I had an instinctive fear and abhorrence of him. I felt when he first spoke to me as if he were mad to be him a stranger, but I dared not put my thought into words. Mark, I am afraid of him. I wish to him that I am not your own sister. Don't tell me that my mother was his wife, for I will not hear Mark, don't let him know any more than he does now. Promise me."

"I will not, Gay," said Mark soothingly. "He may question me until doomsday, but I will not tell him what he asks. If he is your father, he shall not know that you are his daughter. Trust in me, little Gay. I will protect you."

The promise comforted Gay, who smiled faintly through the gloom that had fallen upon her.

The young pair conversed some time longer, while the few embers on the ground died out, and the groups of families broke up, the members scattering in every direction.

As some young people came toward the Hebers, Mark arose abruptly, and went to look after his cousin. Gay replied to the offers of the supper into the party, and sat down by the fire alone, waiting for Mark and behind the young Wiltmans in a wood about the fire.

When she returned, the wagons had been formed into the usual park, the animals were gathered into the inclosure, and the emigrants were formed into groups, the men discussing the prospects of the journey, and the women taking of their children, for the night. Gay looked around for Mark, but they were about to make.

Gay was about to join Mark, when the false lieutenant Fallon approached her, offering him a cigar. The young girl paused, not venturing to come nearer. She knew that the pretended officer was about to pursue his interrupted conversation with her, and in the distance, at some of the groups, she saw the gestures of the two men.

"Fine evening, Mr. Heber," said the disguised Black Jack ceremoniously. "What! you don't smoke? Speaking is a vice. I wish I could break myself of it, but Mark only encourages me."

"Ah, yes," said the pretended lieutenant, pausing to puff out from his cigar. "You are quite right, Mr. Heber. It's not well to allow a lady's name to be bandied about in camp. Your sister is a lovely child, or girl, I should say, for she is quite a young woman. She is very beautiful, and I can bear no further remarks upon the coincidence of names between my own sister and her, and those two years ago. I desire you not to address Miss Heber again upon this subject."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Heber," said the pretended lieutenant, "I am sure there is a mere accident. You have not said that your sister's name is Gay. I presume you cannot see or testify it."

"We will not discuss the matter, sir. Gay Heber is my sister, and while I live she shall not look for a protector."

"Ah, yes," said the pretended officer, using his favorite phrase of assent. "Brothers cannot usually be deceived to sisters or ten seem to be, Mr. Heber. I notice that you have no eyes for the Knox and Halsey girls, and that the pretty Mormon girls might be names for and wear beads at, but you feel to-day, when young Will Wiltman made sheep's eyes at Miss Halsey, you flushed up hotly and looked at him with a jealous sternness that would have been unbecoming in a father, but is quite natural in a brother, although you may not like the fact, your devotion to the pretty Miss Gay is more that of a lover than a brother."

Mark's face was red enough now; and the angry scowl upon his bucolic visage might have saved any man other than the pretended officer.

"I made up my mind when I left home," he said haughtily, "to protect my sister from the attentions of villains and adventurers who throng the western frontier. Any man will find Mark Heber and plain intentions would command my vigilance. However you may be a commissioned officer, Lieutenant Fallon, I shall redouble my care of my sister, and you will please remember that I have given you the acquaintance I shall not invite the name of Lieutenant Fallon. Permit me to wish you a good-evening."

With a proud, stern face Mark walked away to join Conductor Landford.

Gay saw him depart, and with a new idea in her little head refused to join the forms of her wagon, and disappeared under the canopy of the rear.

The pretended officer saw Gay thus vanish, and he sauntered near the wagon, and leaned against the hind wheels.

A moment of startling sounds came from within the wagon. Gay appeared to be opening a trunk.

"I mean to see her again," he thought. "I will not be baffled by a child. I will see her, or be satisfied. She must betray the secret—if she has a secret—to me."

The sounds within Gay at the moment interested him more deeply than he knew.

The young girl had agitated herself deeply upon the possibility that the disguised villain might be her father. That was certain attention in her possession, as has been said, that would identify her to her mother's lover. She kindly Heber had refused to appreciate by themselves in payment of the debt of her life, by her burial afterdeath. There was some trinkets, by upon the person of the babe Gay, and these had been carefully treasured for 1872, all those trinkets had been given to the poorest in a box in the deep tray of the girl's trunk. She had come to the wagon to examine them for the purpose of selecting one to verify the terrible suspicion that the pretended Fallon was her father.

The long clear twilight was falling upon the plain and river, but within the covered wagon it was quite dark. Gay lighted a little lamp and suspended it from the arches of the wagon, at the top of the canvas, just above the trunk, and then she knelt down before it, and began to obtain a proper purpose at night, and she now drew it, stooping to the middle place in the trunk, and with herself.

She then unlocked her trunk with a key she always carried in her pocket, and took out the box in which were deposited the trinkets her treasures.

She was much alone as she could have done in her low small chamber at the Heber farm-house, on the banks of the Seneca Lake, and in the little cabin in the woods, on the night after leaving Leavenworth, Mark had been in the company entirely to her companion. It is true he stored his clothing and effects in the same wagon with her own, and he was close at hand, wrapped in his blanket, and he was always within call, but Gay had never felt so entirely secured from a visit for privacy.

Gay opened her box with a tiny key, which she wore upon a gold chain around her white neck.

Her treasures lay before her, few and simple, but to her priceless.

There was a worn gold wedding ring, which Gay took up and turned to the light. There were the letters "E. to M." around the inner side of the broad rim—"E. to M."

"Edmund and Gabrielle," thought the girl. "I wonder if Lieutenant Fallon's name is Edmund. That was slipped from my mother's finger after her death."

She dropped the ring in the box. The metallic click caught the hearing of the enemy without. With sudden curiosity he drew out his pocket-knife and cut a small slit in the canvas, and cautiously peeped in.

Gay was in the act of examining a small locket, which she had taken from the box of trinkets. Their dark and sparkle caught the villain's gaze.

"Diamonds!" he mentally ejaculated, a thrill of pain causing the upper portion of his face. "A little country girl with a diamond locket! Incredible. Gabrielle used to wear one with a cross on one side and a crescent on the other. Can this be Gabrielle's? Oh, if I could only see!"

He pressed his face closer to the canvas, his eye peering through the aperture he had made.

The camp was now for the gratification of his unlawful curiosity. Sounds of music came from the river side at the further end of the camp, and laughter and song blended with the rippling waters. Many of the men, old and the young people were dancing to the appurtenances, and nearly every member of the train was gathered around to witness the amusement. No one was near the Heber wagon, except Gay's enemy, and he had covered himself that no one could see him. Gay was kneeling on the floor, and he could not be seen upon Gay.

The young girl turned over the locket slowly. Yes, it was a locket—a heart-shaped locket, like cross lines of two upon one side of the heart, and on the other was a single, large, pear of diamond-knit, a bright crescent, the resemblance of which to the one worn by Gabrielle Heber at the Gateway ball, he had noted with his throbbing heart and starting pupil—and that he believed the locket of which he had seen before.

Gay touched the spring, and one leaf flew open, revealing a picture of two small faces, a boy and girl. The boy was a child of four, a boy of some five years, as beautiful as an angel. She looked at these a while, and then touched the second spring, showing a corresponding face of wondrous loveliness, painted like the other upon ivory. This was the picture of Gay's mother, taken in all the pride of youth and beauty, before reason had departed, her throne, and despair and grief and wanderings had made her the shadowy, a wreck, as she actually was.

There was no name upon the locket, and Gay found nothing to confirm or refute her suppositions in regard to the false Lieut. Fallon. She closed the locket softly, and took up from the lady's pictured face, and the spring vibrated, and the locket flew open again. It was a lock of hair, and strange that Gay dropped her box and trinkets.

In an instant the covert her treasures back to their concealment, locking the trunk, and hurried to the end of the wagon, and looked the curtain, locked out.

"Mark!" she cried, "Mark!"

"Here, Gay," said Mark, who had observed that he had been a spy upon the girl's movements. They were not, for he knew that the secret of her treasures, dearer to her than all things else, was safe from the villain. He went away without a word.

"Mark, I am afraid," said Miss Gay, with that shrinking eye, and her cousin drew an arm around her, and she felt safer from her fears.

In a few minutes more her treasures were in her possession of me also. Lieutenant Fallon, or Black Jack, or Edmund, or what he was, had left the camp.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SINGULAR COMBINATION OF EXCITEMENTS.

Our bright little Gay had read the purpose of her enemy, and had resolved to keep her own herself of the trinkets, which would go to her mother's lover, if he should be her lover.

But how was he to gain their possession?

He pondered the question carefully.

Gay, who had been so self-possessed reviving in his mind, he went down toward the busy scene of the dance, and found the young folk dancers with an air of interest. Presently he saw Gay, who had been missing for a time, and he found her in the arms of one of the handfuls of gay dancers.

Gay was in her wagon, and remained hidden for some minutes. Then she ran out, and joined the dancers in the arms of emigrants. She wore a short blue dress, bright-colored shoes, and a white apron, and had used a small comb, and her glossy hair flowed down her back and shoulders in the most picturesque manner. She was certainly the most elegant toned upon her.

Mark Heber, blushing and diffident, asked Gay to dance, and she smilingly accepted his hand, and they joined the dance. He went to and fro in the maze of an old-fashioned country dance.

Gay was in her element, and she seemed to look back to smiling now. His face grew brighter, and he was almost happy when Conductor Landford, to whom the young man was talking, left the dance and approached him.

"You were saying, Mr. Heber," said the guide, "that you desired Lieutenant Fallon's name and address. I have them for you."

Mark looked at the conductor with surprise. He was willing to exercise the particulars of the pretended officer's name, but he had not asked himself.

"You see," said Landford, smiling, "one is apt to take dislikes and sometimes dislikes without reason. I have taken a dislike to him, and he seems a little secret and reserved. He is a man who has been a great deal in the world, but he has concealed many of his resources, gentlemanly and courteous; and then I have a curiosity to know what he has to do with his commander, or he would not have been the bearer of dispatches from Fort Kearney to Fort Sedgwick. Your antipathy to him is a reason for curiosity. I have just talked with Wiltman and me to-day about him, and he remembers him as a boy in the same regiment with his father in Fort Wood, and he predicted a great future for him. He was a favorite with the old colonel in you. He asked me what part of New York State you came from. I don't know as I ever knew, and Wiltman had forgotten. The lieutenant looked actually disappointed because Wiltman couldn't tell him."

"I am sorry you take such a lively interest in my affairs," said Mark Heber in a tone that was not willing to exercise the particulars of the pretended officer's name, but he had not asked himself.

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"I am sorry you take such a lively interest in my affairs," said Mark Heber in a tone that was not willing to exercise the particulars of the pretended officer's name, but he had not asked himself.

"Has he? He seems greatly taken with your sister," said Landford. "He asked me the oddest question—if she was really your sister. Of course I assured him that she was. What a little witch she is, Heber! If she were a few years older, and Will Wiltman

BURR CAUGHT IN THE ACT OF STEALING BY MARK HEBER.

was older, what a fine pair they would make! Whitman is a fine young fellow, Heber, and if he keeps on as he's going you couldn't pick out a better brother-in-law."

Mark's face grew paler, but he made no response. Whitman coming up, he walked away, and stood apart and alone watching the dancers.

Gay came running up to him when the dancing was ended, and remained with him during the remainder of the evening.

At ten o'clock he escorted her to her wagon. She kissed him good-night, as she had done ever since her babyhood, and paused, standing upon the stout whippletree of the wagon, hesitating, yet anxious to unburden her soul to him.

"Mark," she said, "is your revolver loaded?"

"Yes, Gay. It is always loaded. Has the talk to-night of Indians frightened you? It is true we are in the Indian country, but we have a strong party, and we need not fear an attack."

"I'm not thinking of Indians," said Gay—"only of white savages. You and I were talking of mother at supper time, and the idea haunted me that this Lieutenant Fallon might be my father. I had a fancy that I might find out something if I should look over my walnut box, and I went into the wagon and lighted the lantern, and took out the box. I looked the things all over, and suddenly I heard a cry, a sort of groan or exclamation, and I hurried and looked out, and there stood Lieutenant Fallon! He had been spying on me. And I've found a slit he cut in the canvas with his knife. I mended it before I left the wagon."

"The prying hound!" cried Mark. "He must have seen your jewels."

"Of course he did. And he means to steal them, I am sure. He will be along before morning."

"We will be ready for him. Go to bed as usual, Gay, and leave everything to me."

With unbounded faith in her foster-brother, Gay entered the wagon, lowered her curtain, and crept in the darkness to the mattress which lay across the piles of boxes and barrels. But she did not go to sleep.

Mark wrapped himself in his blanket as usual, and lay down under the wagon like a big, faithful watch-dog, apparently asleep, but actually wide awake and on the alert.

The guard that night consisted of one of the Mormons, one of the cattle-raisers going to Texas, and of Mr. Arnold of the Kansas section of the train.

By eleven o'clock the sleep of deep fatigue had fallen upon the camp. The animals slept in their inclosure. Men, wrapped in blankets, lay before or under their wagons in healthy slumber. Women and children were stowed away under the canvas covers, or under the wagons also, and also asleep.

Of all in the camp, but seven souls were awake.

Three of these were the guards. Mark and Gay Heber, the false Lieutenant Fallon and his man Burk, made up the number of wakeful ones.

A little after eleven, the three guards got together for a few minutes' talk. The stars and moon were shedding a flood of light on river and prairie, and the bark of the coyote could be distinctly heard through the stillness. No Indians, or other hostile creature to be feared, was to be seen in the distance, and the guards had no fear of danger proceeding from within the camp, so they chatted together in low tones to beguile the monotony of the watch.

The quick hearing of the false lieutenant revealed to him the condition of affairs. He rolled over toward Burk, and called his name in a whisper.

The man's head was up in an instant.

"What is it, Cap'n," said Burk.

"I want you to do a job for me," said the false lieutenant, in a cautious tone. "Have you been taking more liquor since that affair of yours with the girl?"

"Not a drop, Cap'n. I'm done with drinking so much. I am as sober as a judge."

"That is well. See that you keep so. You know the Heber wagon?"

Burk assented.

"I want you to get something out of it for me. The girl's asleep in it, and Heber is under it. Do you think you can do it? What I want is a small black box in the tray of a trunk at the tail end of the wagon. It's a ticklish job, and perhaps too risky, so I won't urge you against your wishes, if you prefer not to go. With a few false keys to open the trunk, and with a delicate touch-and-go kind of movement, you might do it. The flap at the end of the wagon is buttoned down. A touch would unbutton it. Then the trunk faces the wagon end, and is close to the tail board. The girl has to face it to the tail board, the wagon is packed so close. Otherwise she could never open it."

"It's a ticklish job, Cap'n," muttered Burk. "Then there's the guard."

"You could evade the guard by dropping under the wagon when you hear them coming. I own again, the job *is* ticklish, but then I've known you to rob a wagon while it was travelling under the close watch of the driver. The boys call you 'Light-fingers,' and you've earned the name. I'm anxious to get the box, terribly anxious. If you should get it for me, I'd make it worth your while, Burk."

"I'll reconnoitre," said Burk. "If I can't get it now, I may be able to get it to-morrow night, when the girl's out dancing and the boy is busy. Better try for it at meal-time, don't you say so?"

The pretended lieutenant was very anxious to get possession of the box, and very reluctant to wait. Burk crept away under the wagons on a reconnoitering expedition, but soon returned, scrambling upon all fours, and coiled himself up anew in his blanket.

"No use to-night, Cap'n," he whispered. "I stumbled over a man out yonder, and he's waked up, calling the guard. And here comes one of the guards this way. The jig is up for to-night!"

The guard appearing, Burk pretended to be asleep.

The temporary disturbance was soon quelled, but Burke made no further attempt at robbery that night.

Long before morning, Gay and Mark were sleeping soundly.

At daybreak, as usual, the camp was astir. Mark made the usual morning fire. The only wood at hand was cedar, and the fragrance of this wood soon pervaded the camp, mingling with the odors of steaming coffee and frying ham.

The fires were all made at a little distance from the wagons. The cattle were let out from the inclosure, and allowed to graze or drink from the river, under the superintendence of a few boys.

It was scarcely light, and the gray shadows of the cool morning twilight still lingered all around the camp, shutting out all distant view. Gay and Mark were at the distance of a few yards from their wagon, and were busy in the preparation of the morning meal.

The false Lieutenant Fallon strolled toward Burk carelessly, and whispered, as he passed him:

"Now's your time! Everybody's busy. No one will see you. Put the box in Hatt's wagon till night, and then I'll take charge of it."

The pretended officer sauntered on toward the Whitman group without waiting for a reply.

The circle of wagons had been broken up, and the "prairie schooners" were grouped about in confusion. The opportunity seemed favorable to Burk, and he passed around to the side of the wagons distant from the Hebers, and with his hands in his pockets, and whistling a tune, he sidled up to the Heber vehicle.

Here he paused and looked about him, still whistling.

No one seemed to notice his movements. Every one was busy with breakfast. A robbery was unprecedented in the train, and scarcely any one, seeing Burk there, would have suspected his errand.

The flap of canvas at the back of the wagon came smoothly from the top, and was buttoned to hooks in the tail board. Burk came up behind the vehicle and deftly unbuttoned the lower end of the flap.

The trunk, a simple, large-sized box, covered with sheepskin, strengthened with strips of hard wood nailed on lengthwise, and provided with a stout lock and straps, stood close to the end of the wagon, and the lock faced Burk. The straps hung loosely, as if the trunk had been opened that morning.

Burk drew out from his pocket a bunch of skeleton keys, and fitted one to the lock. The bolt turned. He lifted the lid.

There before him, in the deep tray, was the small black walnut box of which he was in search.

He put out his hands to grasp it, and in the same moment a hand was slapped heavily upon his shoulder!

With an involuntary yell, Burk leaped backward.

The hand on his shoulder tightened its grip. With another yell of terror, Burk recognized in his captor the owner of the wagon, young Mark Heber!

The ruffian tried to break away, and a scuffle ensued, which brought a throng of people to the scene; Conductor Landford, Mr. Whitman and the pretended Lieutenant Fallon being among the first to arrive.

Before any question could be asked, the youth had backed Burk up against the end of the wagon, and held him there in a grip of iron. Then he cried out in his ringing voice:

"Conductor Landford, I have caught this man in the act of robbing my sister's trunk. I accuse him as a thief and a robber, unfit to associate with decent people."

"Caught in the act!" cried Whitman.

"It seems to me that our young friend Heber has lots of trouble," said the pretended Lieutenant Fallon maliciously. "If Miss Heber chooses to leave her trunk wide open, who can blame a man for looking into it? But if he so looks, it's no sign he's a thief."

"The trunk was closed and locked," said Mark. "You see the fellow's bunch of false keys sticking in the lock. He's a thief, and was caught in the act of robbing. I don't know of how long date your acquaintance with the fellow may be, Lieutenant Fallon," continued Mark hotly, "but I believe you have instigated him to the deed. I accuse you as his aider and abettor."

A cry of incredulity rang through the crowd.

"Don't talk so at random, Heber," cried the conductor. "The lieutenant has nothing to do with this scoundrel."

"You don't know what you say, Mark," cried Whitman.

"I do know what I say," repeated Mark firmly and coolly, though his eyes flashed. "I don't know the connection between Fallon and Burk, but there is a connection, and I again accuse Fallon as the author of this robbery! Burk is only his instrument."

A dozen voices entreated Mark to take back his words.

The giant figure of the false lieutenant, towering above all others, strode through the crowd, and the villain dashed his fist full in Mark's face, as he cried out:

"I don't allow myself to be insulted with impunity. Let that teach you discretion, my young friend."

Mark leaped backward like an enraged lion. A heavy ox whip lay on the ground. He picked it up in a flash and brought it across the villain's face, cutting a long livid streak across the eyes and forehead.

A dozen men rushed in between the combatants.

Conductor Landford, Whitman and others held Mark. The pretended lieutenant, foaming at the mouth and glaring like a tiger, was held by equally powerful hands.

No one had eyes or ears for anything but this exciting scene, and it thus happened that a small body of horsemen in the uniform of the United States had come up, and had dashed into the very camp before their approach was noticed.

A loud bugle call from the head of the troops was the first token the emigrants received of the new arrival.

In a moment the combatants were loosed, and all eyes turned to the new-comers.

The disguised Lieut. Fallon looked and turned faint. He knew what this visit meant, if no one else did.

"Conductor," shouted the leader of the troop, "we are here in search of Blue Jack, the noted desperado, accused of the attempted murder of Lieutenant Fallon of the United States army, whom he brutally attacked and flung into the Deep Canyon as dead. The lieutenant is now at Fort Kearney, in a critical condition, and we demand his would-be murderer!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

MAJOR KELPITT'S VALENTINE.

BY AMY RANDOLPH.

"Phe-e-e-ew! how cold it is!" said Major Kelpitt.

For a whiff of the biting February blast had seemed to come into the house with him, and insinuate itself under his collar binding, and into the convolutions of his scarlet ears, even after he had unwrapped his fur muffler, and stood warming his chilled palms before the green and purple spirits of the anthracite heaped grate.

"Seasonable winter weather!" muttered the Major. "But there's no denying that these open grates are a confounded humbug; back frozen—nose scorched. If ever *I* keep house—"

And as the Major whirled around on one foot to lay his fleece-lined gloves on the table, he caught sight of a small square envelope lying close to his malachite inkstand.

"No direction on it, eh?" said the Major, taking it up between his finger and thumb. "Another bill, I suppose; it does seem as if there was no end to paying out money."

He twisted his mouth and eyebrows into a distasteful grimace, as he opened the unsealed document.

But, strange to relate, instead of a bill, it was a dainty sheet of tinted paper, margined round with an embossed wreath of lilies of the valley in silver, and containing in its centre a filagree nest of silver and pink, wherein reposed the most infinitesimal of Cupids, with his bow and arrow. And beneath were written the words:

"DEAR HARRY: I may as well break the ice between us, since you seem determined not to do it. To-morrow is the day sacred to the saint of true love. I dare say you will laugh at the idea, but I always had a superstition about dear old St. Valentine. I shall be at the parlor window at eight to-morrow morning. If you care for me, you will meet me there, and one glance, one touch of your hand, will set my heart at rest.

"Devotedly, your ELSIE."

Major Kelpitt, not being gifted with the poetical complexion that admits of turning pale and red daisy-fashion, became first mahogany color, then tallow candle tint, about his nose and temples. Elsie Vaughan, the beautiful young girl who sat opposite to him at the breakfast table, to write thus to him! Elsie Vaughan with the deep blue eyes, limpid and long-lashed, like a forest pool reflecting the sunshine, and edged round with rushes! Elsie, whose fresh cheeks were round as peaches, and red as the fairest damask rose!

"Upon my word," gasped the Major, "this is most extraordinary—most gratifying, as well. I'd like to know how she knew that my name was Henry Clay Kelpitt. 'Harry!' Nobody has called me Harry since poor old Aunt Tribulation died. And how could I be expected to break the ice, when it never occurred to my mind that she could fancy such a tough old bachelor as I am. Old Mousewell used to say that there was no accounting for the freaks of a pretty girl, and I begin to believe old Mousewell wasn't such an inaccurate judge of human nature. If it had been Petronella Smith now—"

And the Major shrugged his shoulders as he thought of poor, faded little Miss Smith, who occupied the back room up stairs, and gave lessons on the guitar for a livelihood. He knew well enough that Petronella was far more suited to his five and forty years, and his rotundity of girth; he suspected, moreover, that Petronella had a secret liking for him, down in the depths of her innocent, patient little heart. But what man is disinterested enough to bite into the side of a wrinkled winter russet, no matter how well preserved, if there is a golden August apple, just ripened by the summer's sunshine, and still fragrant with dews and showers, hanging within his reach?

"A very graceful way of telling me she is in love with me," said the Major to himself complacently, stroking his iron gray beard, "and not unwomanly either. Will I be there? Of course I'll be there, if I have to crawl on my hands and knees! And—what am I wasting away my time for in this sort of way, when the letter ought to be answered the first thing!"

And catching up his hat and muffler, and tying his overcoat round his neck, by the sleeves, in a peculiar fashion, the Major rushed down stairs and out of doors, to buy something that should fitly express the melting mood of his mind.

"I want a Valentine," said the Major, bouncing into the first stationery store he came across.

"Comic one, sir?" said the portly female behind the counter.

"Do I *look* like a comic Valentine, ma'am?" savagely enunciated the Major. "Of course not. The prettiest you've got."

"That 'll be five dollars, sir."

The Major laid down a bill, and went triumphantly off with a gorgeous net-work of gold and white, with a fat flesh-colored heart barbarously skewered with an arrow hidden beneath its mazes, and containing the most poetical motto that money could buy; while the portly female looked after him, with a smile.

"He's an old un for the sentimental dodge," she reflected, and then forgot all about it in the excitement of selecting two "comics" for a servant-maid and a dress-maker's apprentice.

In the mean time the Major went home, and wrote beneath the jingle of "hearts and darts," "loves and doves," "roses and reposes," the five words, "Dearest, I am ever yours," with the signature in a fine round commercial hand, "H. C. KELPITT."

Then he went out a second time, and invested a hundred dollars in a solitaire diamond ring.

"It's best to lose no time in clinching the bargain," said Major Kelpitt to himself.

He was just tying the ring up in a paper parcel, so as fitly to accompany the Valentine, when there sounded a knock at his door.

"Come in," quoth our hero, thrusting the love signals under a pile of newspapers, and looking rather sheepish.

It was Mrs. Brown, the boarding-house keeper, very red in the face and flurried.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Major!" said she; "but I've left the wrong letter here."

"The wrong letter?" repeated the astounded gentleman, rubbing his nose dubiously.

"Yes, sir—a note from Miss Vaughan. I was to give it to Mr. Harry Ellgrove, up stairs—a lover's quarrel, you see, sir—and what with the landlord's bill coming in, and that owdacious cook getting drunk and giving warning, and Matildy breaking the best china pitcher, at one and the same time, I don't know as I can be blamed for leaving it in your room, instead of the laundress' account, as I've got somewhere in my pocket." And Mrs. Brown fumbled blindly in the folds of her rusty black alpaca dress as she spoke.

"Ma'am," burst forth the Major, "go to—Halifax with your laundress' account!"

Mrs. Brown backed toward the door, but she still feebly held out her hand, and Major Kelpitt, tasting the full bitterness of disappointment, gave up the little note that had set his middle-aged heart to bumping against his breast after such a juvenile fashion.

He sat down ruefully before his fire, when Mrs. Brown had departed.

"So it was a mistake, after all," he reflected, with one hand on each knee, and glaring savagely at the back of the grate. "Life is a mistake, it seems to me. *I* am a mistake. And nobody cares for me, after all!"

Nobody! Ah, Major, Major, you had forgotten poor little Petronella Smith!

"Except—well—may be; I don't know. But she's a dear soul, Petronella is—worth a dozen silly, quarrelling girls of eighteen, like Elsie Vaughan. And it's a pity that the five-dollar Valentine and the diamond ring should be wasted."

Major Kelpitt rang the bell.

"Jane!"

"Sir?" said Jane, the chamber-maid.

"Take these parcels to Miss Smith's room; and, Jane—"

"Sir?"

"Here's a quarter for yourself."

"Yes, sir," said Jane, all smiles.

And away she went, in her youth and prettiness a fit envoy for the little winged god with the quiver full of arrows.

Petronella and the Major were married in the spring, just as Harry Ellgrove and the blue-orbed Elsie were in the sackcloth and ashes of their third quarrel.

"Ten to one that engagement never will come to anything," said the Major to his wife. "I detest such fickle characters."

"So do I," said Petronella, who always subscribed to her husband's opinions, as a dutiful wife should. "And you're *sure*, Harry, I am the only woman you ever, *ever* thought of marrying?"

"Yes, my dear," the Major answered stoutly, "quite sure."

Perhaps he believed it. Who knows?

A REMINISCENCE OF BILLY GRAY.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

I know of but one historic "Billy Gray." He was the most successful merchant of his time. Born of parents poor and humble, in the town of Lynn, Mass., he was apprenticed at an early age, and when he had reached his majority he stepped forth into the world with only a good name to recommend him, and a firm will to do right and to deal justly to sustain him. He established himself in business in Salem, and in five-and-twenty years he was the wealthiest man in the town—a town in which there resided the heaviest merchants of the State. From a trouble with his townsmen, wherein he felt that he had been purposely slighted and grossly abused, he removed to Boston, taking his property and his business with him. From political reasons they had refused, by vote, to promote him to the office of selectman in Salem; but shortly after his advent in Boston he was elevated to be Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts. And from the time of Billy Gray's departure from Salem may be dated the decline of the foreign commerce of that town. She had been the monopolizer of the East India trade; but when Gray took his stocks and his ships to Boston he took with him the impulse which was to change the base of the India and Chinese traffic.

Of the many curious and entertaining stories told of Billy Gray, I will relate the following, which was recently given me by one who knew him well:

While Mr. Gray was in Salem, and after he had become the heaviest business man in the place, he desired an apprentice for his counting-room—a youth who should come with the desire and will to be a merchant, and who should possess such qualities as would fit him for a confidential clerk and correspondent when the time of need should come; for the merchant had made it a rule to bring up those employees who were to be most sacredly trusted under his own eye. Accordingly he advertised his want, and appointed a time when he would receive applicants.

Over in Beverly lived a widow named Atherton, who had been anxious to obtain a situation for her son, a bright-faced, fair-haired boy of fifteen. She was very poor, and felt that she could keep her child no longer at home. She gained knowledge of Mr. Gray's want, and bade her son apply for the situation.

"But," said the lad, trembling, "I dare not go there. He wants an apprentice for his counting-house—an apprentice, not to a trade, but to the profession of merchant. The sons of rich men will apply. I should stand no chance."

"Don't be frightened, Thomas. Remember that Mr. Gray was once as poor as we are. He will judge the applicants for the place by their merits, and not by the standing of their friends. At any rate, it cannot hurt you to apply. You are not afraid of Billy Gray?"

"No, mother," replied the boy, proudly lifting his head, "I am not afraid of the man,—I fear no true man,—but I shrink from an attempt which is almost sure to result in failure. And again, I know that the sons of more prosperous people will be there; for this advertisement carries in its intent the idea that the apprentice selected is to come up in the merchant's sanctum—within his private office. Look at my clothes. They will laugh at me."

"My boy, I have seen Billy Gray dressed in shabbier clothes than are those you now wear. If you would please your mother, go."

And Thomas Atherton went. Arrived at the office of the merchant he found a score of applicants for the place advertised; and, as he had anticipated, among them were sons of families standing high in the social scale.

These scions of prosperity looked down upon the son of the poor widow, and stood apart from him; and they seemed to wonder how one so low had dared to aspire to the position they held in view. Thomas felt uncomfortable, but the sneering glances of the better-dressed youths aroused his self-respect, and he was determined, come what may, to stand his ground.

By and by Mr. Gray entered. He was a small, wiry, pleasant-faced man, with an eye which, as one who once merited his reproof afterward remarked, "could look fire, or look daggers." There were one-and-twenty applicants in all. Eight of these were dismissed upon sight. Of the thirteen remaining the merchant selected seven for examination that day, bidding the other six to present themselves at the same hour on the morrow.

Thomas Atherton was one of the last named; but since he had not been peremptorily discharged, as some had been who had appeared in far more tidy and fashionable guise than he could afford, he resolved to bear up to the end; and he went away to call again on the morrow.

The first boy selected from the retained seven was the son of parents well-to-do in the world. Mr. Gray examined him in those branches of education most in use in general business affairs, and when this had been done he took him into a room where there was a table with pen, ink and paper upon it, and gave him a short bill of lading to copy. He then went out, and closed the door behind him, leaving the lad to perform his task by himself.

Half an hour afterward the applicant was recalled, and he presented his copy. The merchant ran his eye over the freshly written page, and told the lad he might depart.

"If I want you again," he said, "I will send for you."

And after that the other six were examined in the same manner, and were, in turn, in like manner dismissed.

On the following day the six deferred applicants presented themselves, and as Thomas Atherton had been the last to apply, he was the last on the list for examination. His five companions had been disposed of, he knew not how—for they did not come back through the private office—when he was summoned.

Thomas had been a diligent and studious boy at school, and in geography, history, grammar and mathematics he proved himself efficient. After this the merchant took him into the adjoining room, where was the table, with the pen and ink and paper, and gave to him an invoice to copy, and then left him, remarking, as he turned away, that he had business to attend to, and that he—the boy—must make himself comfortable until called for.

The invoice was a short one, and Thomas was not long in copying it. After he had done this he leaned back in his chair, and looked around. The apartment was a small one, with a bare floor, and scantily furnished; and, furthermore, it seemed to have been poorly cared for. The two or three wooden chairs were covered with dust, and in one corner was a pile of old books which appeared, from the finger marks upon their dusty covers, to have been recently overhauled. Close by where he sat a broom stood against the wall, and where it rested upon the floor was a pile of dirt and rubbish swept up into a heap and left. As Thomas regarded the unsightly gathering his eye caught the glitter of a bright substance projecting from the dirt. He reached over and poked it up with his finger, and found it to be a silver half-crown. He took it up and wiped the dust from its bright surface, and then laid it upon the table, placing it upon the invoice which he had received to copy. The proceeding had been a very simple one. He had picked up the money as he would have picked up a bit of iron which he supposed might be of value to its proper owner, but could be of no value to him.

Very shortly after this Mr. Gray reëntered the room, and Thomas gave him the copy he had made. The merchant regarded the fairly written page approvingly.

"What is this?" he asked, observing the half-crown upon the original invoice.

"A piece of money, sir, which I picked up from yonder pile of dirt."

"All right," said Gray, putting the silver piece into his pocket, and then folding up the two invoices. "You can return home, Thomas, and help your mother through the remainder of the week. On Monday morning come to me and take your place in my counting-house."

The sudden emotion of joy almost overcame the trembling boy; but he managed to express his thanks in a befitting manner,—his words were few—his beaming face and swimming eyes told it all.

On Monday morning Thomas Atherton appeared at the merchant's counting-house, and commenced his labors. Three years afterward Mr. Gray had come to trust him with private correspondence. Five years thereafter he was promoted to the post of confidential clerk.

One day he sat with his employer in the little room where he had made his first essay in copying the invoice, and he pleasantly referred to the occasion.

Old Gray smiled, and having taken a pinch of snuff from his well-worn silver box, he said:

"Thomas, I will tell you now what I never told you before. I witnessed every movement you made on that occasion. Through a crack in the partition I was able to gain a view of this apartment, and all it contained. The other applicants had all been in here before you, and I had watched them as I watched you. The examination of the thirteen boys whom I had selected for the final test *cost me, besides my time, just twelve silver half-crowns!* But when, in the end, I had found a lad who, to other eminent qualifications, added that of instinctive truth and honesty, I considered the investment a good one; and I have never regretted it."

And Billy Gray's test stood the wear of time. Thomas Atherton went with him to Boston; and afterward went out as agent to India; and at length he established business for himself, and became one of the strongest and most honored men of the Commonwealth.

—"Dick," said a master to his servant, "have you fed the pigs?" "Yes, massa, me fed um." "Did you count them, Dick?" "Yes, me count um all but one." "All but one?" "Yes, massa, all but one; dare be one little speckled pig he frisk about so much me couldn't count him."

WIT AND HUMOR.

A WEALTHY citizen of New Haven died the other day, who is spoken of as "one of the most sagacious men in New England." As a proof of his sagacity, we suppose, it is mentioned that when the idea was started, in 1830, of building a railroad from New Haven to Hartford, he said, "I have been watching the stages. I find that the average number of passengers in Hartford and New Haven stages is twenty-seven. If anybody wants to invest $3,000,000 in a railroad between these two cities, I am willing they should go ahead. I won't invest."

AN unsophisticated constituent from West Virginia lately called on his member of Congress in Washington, who, according to custom, shook him warmly by the hand, and said, "Come up to the Capitol while we are in session, and I'll give you a seat on the floor of the House." "Wall, no, I thank you," said the constituent; "poor as I am, I always manage to have a cheer to set on at home, an' I ha'n't come to Washington to set on the floor."

THE Bishop of Oxford, having sent round to the church-wardens in his diocese a circular of inquiries, among which was, "Does your officiating clergyman preach the Gospel, and are his conversation and carriage consistent therewith?" one church-warden replied, "He preaches the Gospel, converses beautiful, but don't keep any carriage."

A NEGRO who was suspected of surreptitiously meddling with his neighbor's fruit, being caught in a garden by moonlight, nonplussed his detectors by raising his eyes, clasping his hands, and piously exclaiming, "Good lord! dis yere darkey can't go nowheres to pray any more widout being 'sturbed."

SAID a tipsy husband to his wife, "You need-needn't bl-l-ame me. 'Twas woman that first tem-tempted man to eat forbidden things." "That won't do," retorted the indignant wife. "Woman may have first tempted man to *eat* forbidden things, but he took to *drinking* of his own accord."

A CORRESPONDENT asks why, as w-o-r-k is pronounced wirk, p-o-r-k is not pronounced pirk, s-t-o-r-k stirk, c-o-r-k kirk, and so on to an *irk*-some extent. To which we might retaliate, if to is pronounced too, and do doo, why is not go pronounced goo, and so soo!

"IT is never right to take any one in," said a Sunday-school teacher, who was laying down precepts of morality to his class. "Yes, it is," said a little girl; "my mamma says we should always take in a poor person who comes to our door in a storm."

AS the spring comes on, look out for that celebrated girl with a snake in her stomach, which she swallowed when drinking from a brook, in the dusk of evening, etc. She hasn't failed to put in an appearance, every spring, these forty years.

"ANGELINA, my angel, can you tell me why your lovely eyes are like friends separated by distant climes?" "No, Augustus, I can't. Tell me, oh, tell me why they're thus." "Because they correspond, but never meet."

"HOW shall I sell my horse?" said a jockey to an acquaintance; "his tail came off in less than six hours after I bought him." "Sell him by *wholesale;* for no honorable man will *re-tail* him," was the reply.

"WHAT can be more harrowing to your soul than the thought of wasted opportunities?" asked a teacher of a bright boy. "A peg in my boot harrows my sole more 'n anything else," replied the bright boy.

SOME robbers having broken into a gentleman's house, went to the bed of the servant, and told him if he moved he was a dead man. "That's a lie," said he, "for if I move, I'm sure that I'm alive."

"YOU can shorten that stick a good deal, John, as it will bear cutting at both ends." "I don't know about that, Jake; I cut my ditch at both ends, and the more I cut the longer it grew."

A WOMAN'S rights widow, who has paid taxes on her real estate for several years, declares that she will stand it no longer; that she must be allowed to vote or she will burn her house.

ROTHSCHILD is frequently called a financial king. And so he is, his government being an absolute moneyohy.

EVEN when men are hotly quarrelling, they are apt to be meleo-mouthed in what they say to each other.

WHAT word is that in the English language, of five letters, which, by adding two, becomes shorter? *Short.*

CURRENT ITEMS.

A WILD RIDE TO DEATH.—On Saturday night of last week, a number of boys got a heavy sleigh, and taking it to the top of a high hill near Binghamton, started down the road, with nothing to guide the sleigh, but with two torches in front to warn others of their coming. They shot so swiftly down, that a man coming up with a two-horse team was unable to get out of their way, and the heavy sleigh, with its load of shouting boys, dashed directly into the plunging horses. The collision was terrific. One of the horses and one boy were killed outright. The sleighs were broken to fragments, several boys were dangerously hurt, and all were more or less injured.

JOSEPH RODMAN, a cattle herder in California, had a desperate fight with two grizzly bears, which came upon him suddenly, as he was taking his lunch. He was armed with a navy revolver and a formidable knife, and being a good shot, he gave the bears three balls apiece, before they closed with him. This crippled, but did not disable the ferocious beasts, and a terrible struggle followed, Rodman using his knife with desperate energy, and the wounded bears tearing his clothing and flesh in a frightful manner. The brave fellow came off victor at last, however, but it will be many a day before he will be able to resume his avocation.

A GIRL sixteen years of age, who was at work on a sewing machine in a factory up town, got her hair, which was long and worn in ringlets flowing down over her shoulders, entangled in a swiftly revolving shaft, and before the machinery could be stopped, nearly the whole of her scalp was torn from her head. A surgeon was immediately sent for, who dressed the wound, and the unfortunate sufferer was then taken to her residence.

A GANG of burglars worked all night on a county treasurer's safe in Indiana, used up several dollars' worth of tools, and found ten cents in the secret drawer of the safe. Disgusted with the result, they left a note saying they should not remain longer in that vicinity, but should go into some county where they could at least make enough to keep up their stock of tools and pay their board.

A MAGISTRATE in Cohoes lately attempted to eject a stranger from his church pew by force, and failing in this, he went to his office, made out a warrant, and had an officer arrest the intruder and lock him up. The result is a criminal prosecution against the magistrate for assault, and an action for $2,500 damages for false imprisonment.

ONE day last week a farmer's wife, living near Fort Smith, Ark., heard a loud squealing in the yard back of the barn, and rushing out, she found a large black bear killing a hog. Hastening to the house, she seized a loaded rifle, returned, and shot the bear dead, and gave the family bear steaks for supper.

THE sea is rapidly absorbing Tybee Island, near Savannah. The ravine in which Confederate troops drilled in 1861, is now a salt water pond during high tides, and the bones of Union and Confederate soldiers buried there protrude from their graves, which have been nearly washed away.

AS a music-teacher in New Haven was lying on his bed last Sunday, his wife suddenly appeared, deluged his face with scalding water, and then began to beat him over the head with a saucepan. He at last mastered her, and found that she had gone insane. She was taken to an asylum.

AN adventurer from this city, who went up among the Green Mountaineers of Vermont, to swindle them, a few weeks ago, was detected, and on Tuesday of last week the farmers of Ludlow township tarred and feathered him, and gave him a free ride out of town on a rail.

ONE afternoon recently a little boy five years old strayed from his home in Rockland, Me., and not returning, search was made for him, and the next morning his body was found in the dock, where it seems the little fellow had gone to play with ice floats.

THE British lion—naturalized—which killed Massarti, its keeper, in England a few months [illegible] has at last died of the wounds inflicted on it [illegible] attempt to rescue its victim. It was a fe[illegible] beast, and nearly killed another keeper just [illegible] it died.

A DEFAULTING Philadelphia official, [illegible] victed of robbing the city, has been sente[illegible] three years' imprisonment, and to pay a [illegible] three hundred thousand dollars. It is [illegible] dered that he remain in prison till the fine is [illegible]

A CITIZEN of Providence ran a rusty [illegible] into his foot on Monday of last week, and died [illegible] the lockjaw on Tuesday morning.

TOO KIND.

BY ADA ROWENA CARNAHAN.

I pray you do not be so kind,
Or you will break my heart;
Still, at your tender tone, I find
Unbidden tears will start.

The words your pity prompts to, oh,
I pray you, do not speak;
Else might my dim eyes overflow,
For I am very weak.

And should you see me weep, perchance
You would not understand;
And should I say your tone, your glance,
The pressure of your hand

Had been the cause, 'twould give you pain
That I would save you from;
So in your sympathy refrain,
And let your lips be dumb.

And let me still, as best I may,
Smile, though my sad heart ache;
Nor seek to draw the veil away
I *must* wear, for pride's sake.

In vain we trample nature's laws!
Behold me, how I cry!
And should I say you were the cause,
My lips would frame a lie.

And yet unkindness I could bear,
Or cold indifference;
But kindness coming unaware
Finds me without defence.

I told you I was weak; you see
That I *am* weak indeed.
But do not try to comfort me,
Nor give me any heed.

Kind as you have already been,
Would you be kinder yet?
Oh, then, forget this foolish scene;
At least, seem to forget!

BETWEEN TWO FIRES.

By MRS. SOUTHWORTH,

AUTHOR OF "THE HIDDEN HAND," "SELF-MADE," "THE BROTHERS," ETC.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

THE FALSE AND THE TRUE LOVE.

Did woman's charms thy youth beguile,
And did the fair one faithless prove?
Hath she betrayed thee with a smile,
And sold thy love?
Live! 'Twas a false, bewildering fire;
Too often love's insidious dart
Thrills the fond soul with wild desire,
But kills the heart.
A nobler love shall warm thy breast,
A brighter maiden faithful prove,
And thy manhood shall be blest
In woman's love.

MONTGOMERY.

Emma Cavendish, with her cheeks blooming, and her eyes beaming with pleasure, ran out to meet her friends.

Alden and Laura Lytton, just admitted by the footman, stood within the hall.

Miss Cavendish welcomed Laura with a kiss, and Alden with a cordial grasp of the hand.

"I am so delighted to see you, dear Laura; and you also, Mr. Lytton," she said, leading the way into the parlor.

"Well as I like my kind relatives at Lytton Lodge, I am very glad to get back to you, Emma, dear, and that is the truth," answered Laura, as she sank into an arm-chair and began to draw off her gloves.

Alden said nothing. He had bowed deeply in response to Miss Cavendish's words of welcome, and now he was thinking what a bright and beautiful creature she was, how full of healthful, joyous life she seemed, and wondering that he had never noticed all this before.

But he *had* noticed it before. When he first saw Emma Cavendish in her father's house in the city, he had thought her the most heavenly vision of loveliness that had ever beamed upon mortal eyes, and he would have continued to think so, had not the baleful beauty of Mary Grey glided before him, and beguiled his sight and his soul.

But Mary Grey was gone with all her magic arts, and the very atmosphere seemed clearer and brighter for her absence.

"As soon as you have rested a little, come up to your room, Laura, and lay off your wraps. Tea will be ready by the time we come down again. And, Mr. Lytton, your old attendant, Jerome, will show you to your apartment," said the young hostess, as she arose, with a smile, to conduct her guest.

They left the drawing-room together.

And while Laura Lytton was arranging her toilet in the chamber above stairs, Emma Cavendish told her the particulars of Mary Grey's departure, and also of the letter she had received from her long estranged relative Mrs. Fanning.

They went down to tea, where they were joined by Electra and the Rev. Dr. Jones.

Miss Cavendish presented Mr. Lytton to Dr. Jones. And then they sat down to the table.

Alden Lytton's eyes and thoughts were naturally enough occupied and interested in Emma Cavendish. He had not exactly fallen in love with her, but he was certainly filled with admiration for the loveliest girl he had ever seen. And he could but draw involuntary comparisons between the fair, frank, bright maiden and the beautiful, alluring widow.

Both were brilliant, but with this difference: the one with the pure life-giving light of Heaven, and the other with the fatal fire of Tartarus.

After tea they went into the drawing-room, where they spent a long evening talking over "old times"—*their* "old times" being something less than one year of age.

And every hour confirmed Alden Lytton's admiration of Emma Cavendish.

The next day Alden Lytton was invited up stairs to the old lady's room and presented to Madam Cavendish, who received him with much cordiality, telling him that his grandfather had been a life-long personal friend of hers, and that she had known his father from his infancy up to the time that he had left the neighborhood to practice law in the city.

And after a short interview the ancient gentlewoman and the young law student parted mutually well pleased with each other.

"A fine young man! a very fine young man indeed! but more like his grandfather, as I remember him in his youth, than like his father, whom I could not always well approve," said the old lady to her confidential attendant Aunt Moll, who had closed the chamber door after the departing visitor.

"Dunno nuffin 'tall 'bout dat, ole mist'ess, but he monsus hansume, dough—umph-um; an't he, dough? An an't he got eyes?—umph-um?"

Alden went down stairs.

"The most interesting old lady I have ever seen in my life, with the balsamic aroma of history and antiquity about her and all her surroundings," he said, as he joined the young ladies in the drawing-room.

"Balsamic aroma of *what?*" inquired Electra, who had no taste for poetry, and no reverence for antiquity. "Young man, it was the dried 'yarbs' she keeps in her closet that you smelled. Besides, antiquity has no other odor than that of mould and must."

Alden blushed, laughed, and looked at Emma Cavendish.

"You must not mind my cousin Electra, Mr. Lytton. She is a privileged person among us. By the way, Laura has told you, I presume, of our relationship," said Emma pleasantly.

"Oh, yes," returned young Lytton, with a smile and a bow. "And I am happy to have this opportunity of congratulating you both."

"Thanks," said Miss Cavendish, with a vivid blush.

"I believe there was some talk about a picnic party to the top of Porcupine Mountain, was there not?" inquired Electra, to cut short all sentiment.

"Yes, my dear, and the horses are ordered for eleven o'clock. It is half past ten now, and we will go and put on our hats and habits," replied Miss Cavendish, playfully rising and breaking up the conference.

The party of young friends remained one week longer at Blue Cliffs, every day deepening and confirming the admiration and respect with which the beauty and the excellence of Emma Cavendish inspired Alden Lytton. But yet he was not in love with her.

Every morning was spent by the young people in riding or driving about through the sublime and beautiful mountain and valley scenery of the neighborhood.

And every evening was passed in fancy work, music, reading or conversation in the drawing-room.

And so the pleasant days of the Easter holidays passed away, and the time for study and for work commenced.

Laura and Electra went away from Blue Cliffs on the same day—Laura escorted by her brother Alden, and Electra by her grandfather, the Rev. Dr. Jones.

As the party were assembled in the front hall to take leave of their fair young hostess before entering the large travelling carriage that was to take them to the Wendover Railway station, Emma Cavendish went up to Alden Lytton and placed a letter in his hand, saying, with a frank smile:

"As you are going direct to Charlottesville, Mr. Lytton, I will trouble you to take charge of this letter to our mutual friend, Mrs. Grey, who, you know, is now staying in that town. Will you do so?"

"Certainly—with great pleasure," stammered Alden in extreme confusion, which he could scarcely conceal, and without the slightest consciousness that he was telling an enormous falsehood, but with full assurance that he should like to oblige Miss Cavendish.

"I hope it will not inconvenience you to deliver this in person, Mr. Lytton," added Emma.

"Certainly not, Miss Cavendish," replied Alden, telling unconscious fib the second.

"For, you see, I am rather anxious about our friend. She left in ill health. She is almost a stranger in Charlottesville. And—this is the point—I have not heard from her, by letter or otherwise, since she left us; so I fear she may be too ill to write, and may have no friend near to write for her. This is why I tax your kindness to deliver the letter in person, and find out how she is; and—write and let us know. I am asking a great deal of you, Mr. Lytton," added Emma, with a deprecating smile.

"Not at all. It is a very small service that you require. And I hope you know that I should be exceedingly happy to have the opportunity of doing any very great service for you, Miss Cavendish," replied Alden truthfully and earnestly. For in itself it *was* a very small service in itself that Miss Cavendish had required of him, and he *would* have liked and even preferred another and a greater, and in fact a different service.

"Many thanks," said Miss Cavendish, with a frank smile, as she left the letter in his hands.

Then the adieux were all said, and promises of frequent correspondence and future visits exchanged among the young ladies. And the travellers departed, and the young hostess re-entered her lonely home and resumed her usual routine of domestic duties.

She was anxious upon more than one account.

More than a week had passed since the departure of Mary Grey, and yet, as she had told Alden Lytton, she had never heard even of her safe arrival at Charlottesville, and she feared that her protegé might be suffering from nervous illness among strangers.

More than a week had also passed since she had telegraphed and written to her Aunt Fanning in New York. But no answer had yet come from that unhappy woman. And she feared that the poor relative whom she wished to succor might have met with some new misfortune.

However, Emma had hoped, from day to day, that each morning's mail might bring her good news from Charlottesville or New York, or both.

And even to-day she waited with impatience for the return of Jerome, who had driven the travelling carriage containing the departing visitors to Wendover, and who might find letters for Blue Cliffs waiting at the post-office.

Emma could not be at rest all that day, partly because she missed her young companions, whose society had made the lonely house so cheerful, and partly because she half expected news with the return of Jerome.

She wandered up and down the deserted drawing-room, and then went up stairs to the chambers just vacated by her young friends, where she found Sarah, the chamber-maid, engaged in dismantling beds and dressing-tables, preparatory to shutting up the "spare rooms" for the rest of the season.

All this was very dreary and dispiriting.

She left these apartments, and would have gone into the old lady's room, only that she knew her grandmother was at this hour taking the first of her two daily naps.

As she turned to go down stairs, she glanced through the front hall window, and caught a glimpse of the travelling carriage, with Jerome perched upon the box, slowly winding its way around the circular avenue that led to the house.

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

A SURPRISE.

She ran down stairs briskly enough now, and ran out of the front door.

"Any letters to-day, Jerome?" she inquired.

"No, Miss," answered Jerome, shaking his head.

"O dear, how depressing!" sighed Emma, as she turned to go into the house.

But a sound arrested her steps—the opening of the carriage door. She turned and saw Jerome standing before it, and in the act of helping some one to alight from the carriage.

Another moment, and a tall, thin, dark-eyed woman, with very white hair, and clad in the deepest widow's weeds, stood before Miss Cavendish.

By instinct Emma recognized her aunt. And she felt very much relieved, and very much rejoiced to see her, even while wondering that she should have come unannounced either by letter or telegram.

As for Jerome, he stood wickedly enjoying his young lady's astonishment, and looking as if he himself had performed a very meritorious action.

"Miss Emma Cavendish, I presume," said the stranger, a little hesitatingly.

"Yes, Madam. And *you* are my Aunt Fanning, I am sure. And I am very glad to see you," answered Emma Cavendish. And she put her arms around the stranger's neck and kissed her.

"Dat's better'n letters, an't it, Miss Emmer?" inquired Jerome, grinning from ear to ear, and showing a double row of the strongest and whitest ivories, as he proceeded to take from the carriage various packages, boxes and travelling bags, and so forth.

"Yes, better than letters, Jerome. Follow us into the house with that luggage. Come, dear aunt, let us go in. Lean on my arm. Don't be afraid to lean heavily. I am very strong," said Emma; and drawing the poor lady's emaciated hand through her own arm, she led her into the house.

She took her first into the family sitting-room, where there was a cheerful fire burning, which the chilly mountain air, in this spring weather, made very acceptable.

She placed her in a comfortable cushioned rocking-chair, and proceeded to take off the travelling bonnet and shawl with her own hands, saying:

"You must get well rested and refreshed here before you go up to your room. You look very tired."

"I am very weak, my dear," answered the lady, in a faint voice.

"I see that you are. I am very sorry to see you so feeble, but we will make you stronger here in our exhilarating mountain air. If I had known that you would come by this train, I should have gone to the railway station in person to meet you," said Emma kindly.

Mrs. Fanning turned her great black eyes upon the young lady and stared at her in surprise.

"Why, did you not get my letter?" she inquired.

"No," said Emma. "I anxiously expected to hear from you from day to day, but heard nothing either by letter or telegram."

"That is strange! I wrote to you three days ago that I should be at Wendover this morning, and so, when I found your carriage there, I thought that you had sent for me."

"It was very fortunate that the carriage was there, and I am very glad of it; but it was not in fact sent to meet you, for, not having received your letter, I did not know that you would arrive to-day. The carriage was sent to take some visitors who had been staying with us, and were going away, to the railway station. It is a wonder Jerome had not explained this to you. He is so talkative," said Emma, smiling.

"I never talk to strange servants," gravely replied the lady. "But I will tell you how it happened. I really arrived by the earliest train, that got in at Wendover at five o'clock in the morning. There was no carriage from Blue Cliffs waiting for me at the railway station, and in fact no carriage from any place, except the hack from the Reindeer Hotel. So I got into that, and having previously left word with the station-master to send the Blue Cliffs carriage after me to the Reindeer when it should come, I went on to the hotel to get breakfast, and to lie down and rest. But when half the forenoon had passed away without any arrival for me, I began to grow anxious, fearing that some mistake had been made."

"I am very sorry you had to suffer this annoyance, immediately upon your arrival here too," said Emma regretfully.

"Oh, it did not last long. About noon the landlord, Greenfield, rapped at my door, and told me that the Blue Cliffs carriage had come, and that the ostler was watering the horses while the coachman was taking a glass of beer at the bar."

"Jerome had doubtless taken our visitors to the station, and called at the Reindeer to refresh himself and his horses."

"Yes, I suppose so. Almost at the same moment that the landlord came to my door to announce the carriage, I heard some one else, under my window, saying to the coachman that there was a lady here waiting to be taken to Blue Cliffs. And I went down and got into the carriage with 'bag and baggage.' Jerome, if that's his name, very gravely, with a silent bow, put up the steps and closed the door, and mounted his box and drove off."

"But you must have left some baggage behind."

"Yes, three trunks; one very large. Mr. Greenfield, of the Reindeer, promised to send them right after me in his wagon."

While they had been speaking, Emma Cavendish had touched the bell and given a whispered order to the servant who answered it.

So now the second footman, Peter, appeared with a waiter in his hands, on which was served tea, toast, a broiled squab and a glass of currant jelly.

This was set upon a stand beside Mrs. Fanning's easy-chair.

"I think that you had better take something before you go up stairs," said the young hostess kindly, as she poured out a cup of tea.

Consumptives are almost always hungry and thirsty, as if nature purposely created an unusual appetite for nourishment, in order to supply the excessive waste of tissue caused by the malady.

And so Mrs. Fanning really enjoyed the delicate luncheon set before her, so much that she finished the squab, the jelly, the toast and the tea.

When she had been offered and had refused a second supply, Emma proposed that she should go up to her room, and she took her at once to the beautiful corner chamber, with its southern and eastern aspect, that had been fitted up to receive her.

Here she found that her travelling trunks, which had already arrived from Wendover, were placed.

And here, when she had changed her travelling dress for a loose wrapper, she laid down on a lounge to rest, while Emma darkened the room and left her to repose.

Miss Cavendish went straight to the old lady's apartment.

Mrs. Cavendish was sitting in her great easy-chair by the fire, with her gold-rimmed spectacles on her nose, and her Bible lying open on her lap.

As Emma entered the room the old lady closed the book, and looked up with a welcoming smile.

"I have come to tell you, my dear grandma, that Aunt Fanning has arrived," said Emma, drawing a chair and seating herself by the old lady's side.

"Yes, my dear child; but I'll trouble you not to call her Aunt Fanning," said Madam Cavendish haughtily.

"But she *is* my aunt, dear grandma," returned Emma, with a deprecating smile.

"Then call her Aunt Katherine. I detest the name of that tavern-keeper whom she married."

"Grandma, grandma, the man has gone where at least there can be no distinctions of mere family rank," said Emma.

"That's got nothing to do with it. We are *here* now. Well, and when did Katherine arrive, and where have you put her? Tell me all about it."

Emma told her all about it.

"Well," said the old lady, "as she is here, though sorely against my approbation—still, as she *is* here, we must give her a becoming welcome, I suppose. You may bring her to my room to-morrow morning."

"Thank you, grandma, dear; that is just what I would like to do," replied the young lady.

Accordingly the next morning Mrs. Fanning was conducted by Emma to the "Throne Room," as Electra had saucily designated the old lady's apartment.

Madam Cavendish was dressed with great care, in a fine black cashmere wrapper, lined and trimmed with black silk, and a fine white lace cap, trimmed with white piping.

And old Moll, also in her best clothes, stood behind her mistress' chair.

The old lady meant to impress "the tavern-keeper's widow" with a due sense of reverence.

But the gentlewoman's heart was a great deal better than her head. And so, when she saw the girl whom she had once known a brilliant, rich-complexioned brunette, with raven hair and sparkling eyes and queenly form, changed into a woman old before her time, pale, thin, gray and sorrow-stricken, her heart melted with pity, and she held out her hand, saying kindly:

"How do you do, Katie, my dear? I am very sorry to see you looking in such ill-health. You have changed very much from the child I knew you, twenty-five years ago."

"Yes," said Mrs. Fanning, as she took and pressed the venerable hand that was held out to her. "I have changed. But there is only one more change that awaits me—the last great one."

"Moll, wheel forward that other easy-chair. Sit down at once, my poor Katie. You look ready to drop from weakness. Emma, my child, pour out a glass of that old port wine and bring it to your aunt. You will find it in that little cabinet," said Madam Cavendish, speaking *to* one and another in her hurry to be hospitable, and to atone for the hard thoughts she had cherished and expressed toward this poor suffering and desolate woman.

And Katherine Fanning was soon seated in the deep, soft "sleepy hollow," and sipping with great comfort the rich old port wine.

"Yes, Katie," said the old lady, resuming the thread of the conversation, "that last great change awaits us all—a glorious change, Katie, that I for one look forward to with satisfaction and desire *always*—with rapture and longing *sometimes*. What will the next life be like, I wonder? We don't know. 'Eye hath not seen—ear heard,'" mused the old lady.

The interview was not a long one. Soon Emma Cavendish took her aunt from the room.

"You must come in and see me every day, Katie, my dear," said the old lady, as the two visitors left.

And from that time the desolate widow, the homeless wanderer, found loving and tender friends, and a comfortable and quiet home.

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

ALDEN AND HIS EVIL GENIUS MEET AGAIN.

Meanwhile the visitors that had left Blue Cliffs that morning travelled together until they reached Richmond.

The train got in at ten o'clock that night.

There was no steamboat to Mount Ascension Island until the next day.

So the party for that bourne were compelled to spend the night at Richmond.

Alden, although he might have gone on to Charlottesville that night, determined to remain with his friends.

The whole party went to the Henrico House, where they were accommodated with adjoining rooms.

The next morning they resumed their journey, separating to go their several ways. Alden saw the two young ladies safely on the steamboat that was to take them to Mount Ascension, and then bade them good-bye, leaving them in charge of the Rev. Dr. Jones, who was to escort them to the end of their journey.

He had barely time to secure his seat for Charlottesville, where he arrived on the afternoon of the same day.

The letter he had to deliver to Mary Grey "burned in his pocket." He could not have done otherwise than promise to deliver it in person, when fair Emma Cavendish had requested him to do so. And now of course he must keep his word, and go and carry the letter to her, although he would rather have walked into a fire than into that false syren's presence.

It is true that his love for her was dead and gone. But it had died such a cruel and violent death that the very memory of it was full of pain and horror, and to meet her would be like meeting the spectre of his murdered love. Nevertheless he must not shrink from his duty; he must go and do it.

Before reporting at his college, he went to a hotel and changed his clothes, and then started out to find Mary Grey's residence. That was not so easily done. She had omitted to leave her address with her friends at Blue Cliffs, and Emma's letter was simply directed to Mrs. Mary Grey, Charlottesville.

True, Charlottesville was not a very large place; but looking for a lady there, was something like looking for the fabulous needle in the hay stack.

Still he had formed a plan of action to find her. He knew that she pretended to great piety; that she was a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and that wherever she might happen to sojourn she would be sure to join the church, and make friends with the clergy of her own denomination.

So Alden bent his steps to the house of the Episcopal minister at Charlottesville.

He found the reverend gentleman at home, and received from him, as he had expected to do, the address of Mrs. Grey.

"A most excellent young woman, sir—an earnest Christian. She lost not a day in presenting her church letter and uniting herself with the church. She has been here but ten days, and already she has taken a class in the Sunday-school. A most meritorious young woman, sir," said the worthy minister, as he handed the card with Mrs. Grey's new address written upon it.

To Alden, who knew the false-hearted beauty so well, all this was surprising.

But he made no comment. He simply took the card, bowed his thanks, and left the house to go and seek the home of Mrs. Grey.

Among many falsehoods, the woman had told one truth when she had informed Emma Cavendish that she had a lady friend at Charlottesville, who kept a student's boarding-house. She had met this lady just previous to engaging as drawing-mistress at Mount Ascension. And by her alluring arts she had won her sympathy and confidence. She was staying with this friend at the time that Alden sought her out.

He now easily found the house.

And when he inquired of the negro boy who answered the bell whether Mrs. Grey was at home, he was answered in the affirmative, and invited to enter the house.

The boy opened a door on the right hand of the narrow entrance passage, and Alden passed into the parlor, and found himself unannounced in the presence of his false love.

There was no one with her, and she was sitting at a table, with drawing materials before her, apparently engaged in copying a picture.

Hearing the door open and shut, she lifted her head and looked up.

Seeing Alden Lytton standing before her, she dropped the pencil from her fingers, turned deadly pale, and stared at him in silence.

Alden, if the truth must be told, was scarcely less agitated; but he soon recovered his self-command.

"I should apologize," he said, "for coming in unannounced; but I did not know that you were here. I was shown into this room by the waiter, supposing that I was to remain here until he took my card to you."

She neither moved nor spoke, but sat and stared at him.

"I have only come as the bearer of a letter to you from Miss Cavendish, a letter that I promised to deliver in person. Here it is," he said, laying the little packet on the table before her.

Still she made no answer to his words, nor any acknowledgment of his service. She did not even take up Emma's letter.

"And now, having done my errand, I will bid you good-afternoon, Mrs. Grey," he said, bowing and turning to leave the room.

That broke the panic-stricken spell that held her still.

She started up and clasped her hands suddenly together, exclaiming:

"No, no, no: for pity's sake *don't* go yet! Now that you are here, for Heaven's sake stay a moment and listen to me!"

"What can you possibly have to say to me, Mrs. Grey?" coolly inquired the young man.

"Oh, sit down! sit down one little moment and hear me! I have not got the plague, that you should hasten from me so," she pleaded.

It was in Alden's thoughts to say that moral plagues were even more dangerous and fatal than material ones; but the woman before him looked so really distressed that he forbore.

"I know that you have ceased to love me," she went on in a broken voice. "I know, of course, that you have ceased to love me—"

"Yes, I am thoroughly cured of that egregious boyish folly," assented Alden grimly.

"I know it, and I would not seek to recover your lost, lost love; but—" Her voice, that had been faltering, now broke quite down, and she burst into tears, and sobbed as if her heart was breaking.

And her grief was as real as it was violent; for she had loved the handsome young law student, and she mourned the loss of his love.

Alden sat apparently unmoved, but in truth he was beginning to feel very sorry for this woman, but it was with the sorrow we feel for a suffering criminal, and totally distinct from sympathy or affection.

Presently her gust of tears and sobs exhausted itself, and she sighed and dried her eyes, and said:

"Yes, I know that all love is quite over between us."

"Quite over," assented Alden emphatically.

"And it was not to renew that subject that I asked you to stay and listen to me."

"No," said Alden gently, "I presume not."

"But, though all thoughts of love are forever over between us, yet I cannot bear that we should live at enmity. As for me, I am not your enemy, Alden Lytton."

"Nor am I yours, Mrs. Grey. You and I can live as strangers without being enemies."

"Live as strangers! Oh, but that is just what would break my heart utterly. Why should we live as strangers? If all love is over between us, and if we are still not enemies, if we have forgiven each other, why should we two live as strangers in this little town? Why may we not meet at least as the common friends of every day?"

"Because the memory of the past would preclude the possibility of our meeting pleasantly or profitably."

"Oh, Alden, you are very hard! You have not forgiven me!"

"I have utterly forgiven you."

"But you cherish hard thoughts of me?"

"Mrs. Grey, I must regard your actions—the actions that separated us—as they really are," answered Alden sadly and firmly, as he arose, and took his hat to leave the room.

"No, no, no: DON'T go yet. You MUST hear me! you SHALL hear me! Even a convicted murderer is allowed to speak for himself," she exclaimed, with passionate tears.

Alden sighed, and sat down.

"You must regard my actions as they really are, you say. Ah, but the extenuating circumstances, the temptations, the motives—aye, the motives!—have you ever thought of them?"

"I can see no motive that could justify your acts," said Alden coldly.

"No, not justify—I do not justify them even to myself—not justify, but *palliate* them, Alden—palliate them at least in *your* eyes, if in no others."

"And why in my eyes, Mrs. Grey?"

"Oh, Alden, all was planned for your sake!"

"For *my* sake? I pray you do not say that!"

"Listen, then, and consider all the circumstances. I loved you and promised to be your wife at that far distant day, when you should come into a living law practice. But I was homeless, penniless and helpless. I had lost my situation in the school, and I had no prospect of getting another.

"The term of my visit to Emma Cavendish had nearly expired, and I had nowhere to go. Governor Cavendish loved me with the idolatrous love of an old man for a young woman, and besought me to be his wife with such insane earnestness that I thought my refusal would certainly be his death, especially as it was well known that he was liable to apoplexy, and that any excitement might bring on a fatal attack. Under all these circumstances, I think I must have lost my senses; for I reasoned with myself—most falsely and fatally reasoned with myself thus: Why should not I, who am about to be cast out homeless and penniless upon the wide world—why should I not secure myself a home, and save this old man's life for a few years longer, by accepting his love and becoming his wife? It is true that I do not love him, but I honor him very much. And I would be the comfort of his declining years. He could not live long, and when he should come to die, I should inherit the widow's third of all his vast estates. And then, after the year of mourning should be over, I could marry my true love, and bring him a fortune too. There, Alden, the reasoning was all false, wicked and fatal. I know that now. But O, Alden, it was not so much for myself as for others that I planned thus. I thought to have blessed and comforted the old man's declining years, and after his death to have brought a fortune to you. These were my motives. They do not justify, but at least they palliate my conduct."

She ceased.

Alden did not reply, but stood up again with his hat in his hand.

"And now, Alden, though we may never be lovers again, may we not meet sometimes as friends? I am so lonely here! I am, indeed, all alone in the world. We may meet sometimes as friends, Alden?" she asked pathetically.

"No, Mrs. Grey. But yet, if ever I can serve you in any way I will do so most willingly. Good-afternoon," said the young man. And he bowed and left the room.

As he disappeared, her beautiful face darkened with a baleful cloud. "No fury like a woman scorned," wrote one who seemed to know. *Her face darkened like a thunder-storm, and from its cloud her eyes shot forked lightning. She set her teeth, and clenched her little fist and shook it after him, hissing:*

"He scorns me! He scorns me! Ah! he may scorn my love! Let him beware of my hate! He will not meet me as a friend, but he will serve me willingly! Very well. He shall be often called upon to serve me, if only to bring him under my power!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

SWALLOWING A MAN.

John Thomas was a man of keen wit, and strongly tinctured with a love of the humorous. He had been down to Concord, and had seen the Fakier of Ava perform his wonderful tricks of ledgerdemain. He was relating his experience in the bar-room of the Conway House, and among other things he declared that he had gained an insight into many of the magician's manipulations, and that several of the most wonderful tricks he could perform himself.

"For instance," said he, "I can swallow a man whole."

"Bah!" cried Tom Staples, a red-faced woodman, weighing at least two hundred; "p'r'aps you could swallow *me?*"

"Yes."

"I'd like to see you do it."

"I can do it."

"I'll bet fifty dollars you can't."

"I shall take that bet."

"Then let's see you begin."

"Not now. I have just eaten supper. I will do it to-morrow morning, in the presence of as many witnesses as you choose; and it shall be done in the Square in front of the hotel."

This was agreed to, and the money was put up. By the following morning the news that John Thomas was to swallow Tom Staples whole had become wide-spread, and a vast concourse, embracing men, women, and children, had assembled to witness the wonderful feat.

At the appointed time the chief actors appeared in the square. John Thomas was smiling confidently, as though sure of success; while Tom Staples looked a little timid and uneasy, as though not quite at rest concerning what was to become of him.

"Are you ready?" asked John.

"All ready," answered Tom. "Begin as soon as you please."

"Will you have the goodness to take off your hat?"

"Sartin."

"Now your boots."

Tom removed his boots.

"Next you will remove your coat. Those big brass buttons might stick in my throat."

Tom took off his coat; and as he threw it upon the ground one of the cooks came out from the hotel with a pail of melted lard and a big whitewash brush, which he deposited by the side of John Thomas.

"Now," pursued John, "you will take off your stockings, and then remove your pantaloons and shirt."

"Eh?—D'ye mean for me to strip stark naked?" queried Tom, aghast.

"Of course I do. The agreement was, that I was to swallow *you*. You are *meat*, but your clothes aren't, nor were they in the bond. If you will strip, I will give you a thorough greasing, and double the bet if you wish. I know I can swallow you,—or, at all events, *I can* TRY!"

Tom gave up beat, and invited his friends into the hotel. S. C., JR.

ECONOMY.—Never buy anything which with propriety you may avoid buying. People are often reputed to have greater fortunes than they really possess. This is sometimes a fatal circumstance. In attempting to live up to their reputed income, they frequently bring ruin upon themselves. The grand principle of economy is the dismission of vanity.

—A phrenologist, strolling through a church-yard in France, perceived a grave-digger tossing up the earth, among which were two or three skulls. The craniologist took one up, and after considering it a little time, said, "Ah, this was the skull of a *philosopher*." "Very like, sir," said the grave-digger, "for I do see it is somewhat *cracked*."

THE NEW YORK LEDGER

ROBERT BONNER, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR

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Stand on the ledge but to read, my boy, for next year the type will be better than any one may get elsewhere.

The main line among contributors will be the novel and the short story, without either, can hop, will be constantly spread before the readers of the *Ledger.*

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ROBERT BONNER, Publisher,
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Startling Truths.

The scientists will yet drive us all distracted. They show that all substance may exist in the form of either solids, liquids, vapors, or gases; that by increase of heat, the solid may be changed to a liquid, the liquid to a vapor, and the vapor to a gas; and that the increase of heat, or such change from solids, clear through the scale up to gases, may produce any of a more rapid vibration of the atoms of the substances themselves.

These truths may seem very harmless when clothed in the cold and unemotional language of science, but just consider the matter practically. Here is a man who is a solid substance, and has no idea of ever becoming even a liquid, much less a vapor or a gas. But the scientists—mind, the scientists of which his solid substance is composed got to vibrating more rapidly than is consistent with a solid state, and straightway he may become a liquid, and be carried off in a pail. As a specimen of the initial workings of the atomic vibration which is due to transform our substances, what terrors copious perspiration may here after strike to our souls!

There are degrees in the terror which these truths inspire. To be melted into a liquid would be bad enough; but to be transformed into a vapor, or rarefied into a gas, would be intolerable. Of course, if once atomic vibrations reduce him to a liquid or a gas, the interest in his human destiny ceases; but the idea of his being thus unexpectedly dissipated may still have some interest for his remains, which, as a liquid, could be preserved, or even buried with due honors. But in the present atomic vibration goes on still more rapidly, and the discomforts are greater to our then incarnated present passing off, in the form of vapor, beyond the possibility of preserving our unsavory attentions. This would be gracious even to the friends who would not wish to see us even here. The atomic vibration still more deliciously, the vapor itself fades from sight, and the defunct, passing off into the realm of gas, appears from the domain of the mortal scenes, with no possibility even of marking his last resting place. In fact, what last resting place could there be for a gas?

Speak Low—Speak One Hundred.

Have you a quick temper?

A quick temper and a warm heart often go together.

Perhaps, however, you are irritable. Irritability, in many cases, is the result of ill-health, especially of a deranged condition of the nervous system. Improve your health, and you will improve your disposition.

Besides this, there are many very simple rules by the adoption of which you may control or prevent the manifestations of your irritability. One of these is, whenever you are greatly disturbed and excited, to speak slowly and in a low voice. As soon as you shall have controlled yourself, under circumstances of provocation, sufficiently to speak several words without raising your voice above its usual pitch, you will find that you have already obtained a surprising mastery over your feelings also.

Another rule is, when you are very angry always count one hundred before speaking. This also is a good and efficacious remedy. If you only observe it; but the chances are one hundred to one that when you are very, very angry, you will disregard the rule one hundred times where you observe it once.

The Flowers and the Birds.

The first flowers of spring will soon be open, and the air will soon be musical with the songs of birds.

Flowers and birds are common pleasures, but they are pleasures of which we never tire. They make the world more beautiful and more cheerful. They awaken gratitude to God, and they should incline us to do more to render our fellow-beings happy, when we see so much done by our Maker for the enjoyment of all.

The Late Mrs. Astor—Her Hands were Never Idle.

Mrs. ASTOR, wife of WILLIAM B. ASTOR—the richest man in New York—died a few days ago. A writer in the *Evening Post* pays the following simple but touching tribute to her virtues:

"Her most distinguishing characteristics were simplicity and industry. Her hands were never idle. It was well for the poorest and coming women in society that it was so. Many a poor woman in my time was the simplest and most busy. Her books and work were always at hand, so she was laid aside the other was taken up. Her love of flowers was extreme, and during the last years of her life she found great pleasure in the floral work which she watched with the tenderest interest."

A Fearful Disease.

A few weeks ago, a little boy, seven years old, went home from school, in West Thirty-fifth street, in this city, and complained that he had been injured by some of his schoolmates. At first evident, the next morning he died. There was a prospect that we might have a trial for murder or manslaughter of the school infantile defendant; and although there was no probability that the example of our English ancestors, who executed boys only eight or nine years of age, would be followed, yet the supposed crime was very painful for contemplation.

Later events have revealed another cause for the death of the unfortunate little fellow. Four children in the same family have died, and the disease is pronounced *cerebro spinal meningitis.* At our latest accounts a fifth child—a bright and interesting girl of thirteen—was in the Bellevue Hospital, suffering from the same malady.

Cerebro spinal meningitis is a rare but most terrible disease. Its victims suffer insupportable pain, especially in the head and back. They are very apt to be hideously contorted—the head being bent after over backward. Sometimes, according to the testimony of physicians, they recover; in other cases they remain blind, and in other cases idiotic. Dr. CRONKHITE once said of the disease, that it was more to be dreaded than Asiatic cholera. Among the remarkable facts in life, are terrible restrictions, of which we have heard, that the business of a lawyer was confined to this awful disease in a ritual speech in court, to which he referred to a daughter of his own who had been afflicted by it. She was apparently convalescent at the time, but after lingering a few weeks, she died.

This reminded us of another very awful case. A lady in Brooklyn had a fine boy and all the eighth-indeed people in the settlement. She was a member of the Methodist Episcopal church, and was a leading member of her church. Her husband was a prominent citizen, with a large family of children. The boy was taken with cerebro spinal fever. Our own professional services, and finding no other property to serve, signify to each, it will be produced, as it will prevent the possibility of the loss of money. Address all letters and make all drafts in the name of the owner, specify town, county, or Ave counts a quarter. Always explain at the office to which the paper is addressed.

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GOOD-NATURE.

MY DEAR MR. BONNER: Hundreds of questions are asked of me every year; and I am surprised to find how poor and superficial they are. They respect external life mostly; and if they touch upon morals, it is generally of conventional matters, and not of real heart matters.

Is it common after the things on which so much of life depends for its happiness? An obscure man in the north of Italy, a dignified doctrine, seem to have a charm to men. But how few people ever ask what is the most valuable good-nature is one of the most precious commodities of life, both to the possessor and to all that come in contact with him. One may own an exquisite picture, and you look at it in his house, he beauty is scoppered, and few derive any pleasure from it. One having glorious scenes may flash a moment's admiration upon spectators, but good-nature brings happiness to scores and hundreds; and the best of it is, that it takes nothing from the possessor.

There is so much care in life; so many that are wearing away their spirits and their health so many that are hearing the sad news of the loss of property, and so many who are losing a ray of hope, that their faces look a beautiful color. Good-nature is the most beautiful of all hues, and it is spread on the given shelf forth without measure. It shines, like the sun, into all places, high and low, alike. It chooses nothing, but blesses all. Good-nature is the sweetest light, and, pervading all upon fruition, lightens the tasks of life, and makes the heart glad. It is the gift of the richest giver, and all this, too, without the slightest drain upon the resources of the possessor.

Some men are good-natured in spots; some are so, sometimes. Some have it their own way, or have fallen upon some good luck; imagining a few words, she died. Some are cross when burdened; some are good-natured when relieved. Some are at home in health and geniality in the sun, and among the flowers; but when the storm comes, they are the first to complain and the last to bear the brunt of the luminous heart! One who bears the sunny drop? Others call one who is sunny, whom all men bless when he comes, whose property is every where, and whose wealth is wear crowns. They do. Granted thoughtful, and good-natured, are the richest men, and unconsciously, but a hundred hearts plaze it. Never put a man to the test, for he will be right all their days.

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

CLUBS FOR THE WORKING MEN.

I read an article on this subject the other day, which set me to thinking. I will set forth the necessity, after a man's hard day's labor, of a resort where he can find rest and comfort.

Now this is well, were there not a better way. The working man, in the numerous clubs for working women, because our politicians have not yet thought of it, they have existed for a long time—thanks to "corner grocery" and "bar-room"—for the want of a place to meet that comes handy, and smell in reason. Now, I propose that we have clubs for the working men, where they can meet, and, as the working sun, does not need, after a hard day's work, to go home, where, on the unsupportable of an evening, away from the wife and children, a man may find rest from his hardened may, it is where, in the front, he can find a cheerful fire burning and room for all the family, and where he can have his game of low-working with it; while she, with "Gus's" the seamstress, and all the other children present home, stands over the perpetual washing, and cooking for the next day. Why not have crown children hanging to her dragged skirts, and the husband by her own means, and, if not even perhaps, to some for a better, happier and wiser home? Why not have a place where he can go, in his own way, to meet his friends, and smell in reason, and not have to go to the corner grocery, or the bar-room, or some other place, as the working man does

PACING THE FLOOR.

BY MARY KYLE DALLAS.

Sailors' wives accept love's gift of a basket of pacing the floor.

Oh, who would be a sailor's wife,
And live a life of misery?
Her black hair's gone entirely gray
Before she's more than forty.
And many tavern and boardinghouse maids
Proclaim that day is over,
Before the sailor's wife
Pares her lonely floor.

To other wives pray twilight brings
The evening's cozy and kiss,
And all the restful cares of day
Are changed for longing bliss;
But she can hear no welcome step,
No kiss her lips may know,
His bed how tenant the lonely dock,
As here the lonely floor.

The rattle of a window pane,
The rustle of a leaf,
The sound of some mate awake,
Is quite enough to rouse her,
And up and down, and up and down
Her anxious footsteps go;
As she would tread her tired fears down,
She paceth to and fro.

Saith she, "My love, my true love,
Is on the stormy sea,
How can I gain sweetness
Of thy refreshful sleep?
For love is not all unmercerful,
And hearts may not rule Fate,
And how much I would do for thee
I can be taught but wait.

"And so, my white candle,
To yellow will unguent,
The hand unlike
Perchance may increase;
I may be written white
By the white wrath of the sea,
Ev'ry dead sailor's baby
Lies dead in my face."

Ah, who would be the sailor's wife
When his ship sails away,
And sadly in life planning
She pineth to and fro?
For the restless heart wakes restless feet,
And the tired heart longest more,
And the tired heart wakes weary feet and beat,
Pacing her lonely floor.

FILIPPO, THE BANDIT;

OR, THE

Necromancer of Monte Gargano

By CARLOTTA SIMMELEY,

AUTHOR OF "THE MYSTERY OF NO. 27."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RESCUE OF SANTA BARBARINI.

Fausting, the recluse of Santa Barbarini, was indeed a vile wretch. As Fra Sigismond said truly and, she had listened to many a confession, she was competent to judge her for herself over several years of her life.

Seated in her lonely chamber, high above the noise, the turmoil and the confusion of the Foggia streets, the recluse passed day after day in a continuation of duty.

To the world she seemed an idler—one who had renounced it and lived a life apart from the business of the multitudes of her brain. Some believed—and the number was not small—that the numbers—that the mental activity was compensated by other gifts of far more value to the world than commonplace intelligence. Infants and insane persons are sometimes believed an insight into and information received from the key of ordinary mortals, as the Mariotti and their lives were known to the Fra Gianni in Foggia; but could read the features and should be consulted as these monks, she would reveal secrets about to transpire.

It was this belief that induced Fra Sigismond's hint so readily, and hoping for visit might not be unproductive of favorable results, she repaired to Santa Barbarini.

Fra Sigismond had already himself was kept waiting many moments before she was admitted to the presence of the recluse. But the figures known here this time was being employed by the persons whom she had come to consult, it is possible she would have quitted the place before the desired audience was granted.

Seated by her lofty apartment, her face shaded with a heavy veil, and by a dingy mask, the strange woman was giving audience to another person, and in a manner of degree quite different from that of the Marchesa.

The recluse was a large woman apparently formed, of graceful movements, and possessing that repose of manner which always indicates true nobility. It needed but a look at her face to convince the beholder of which every advantage concurring her for in no respect did she give evidence of the possession of mental deficiency or physical deformity which were supposed to constitute her claims to interest. On the contrary, she was among the few who were admitted to her presence as a woman far superior in intelligence to one whose mind had a wider and freer, instead of a more limited range than others.

Her dress was black, of a material that settled well her large, full figure, and though the mask which she habitually wore gave her a mysterious, almost fearful appearance, that impression was modified when a glance at her hands, as fair, as small and as shapely, unconsciously inspired respect, interest and confidence.

The voice of her visitor as she spoke were soft and winning, and her rare choice of language denoted a mind of more than usual refinement and strength.

The person to whom the recluse was granting the favor of an audience at the time of one of the Marchesa's visit, was one whose appearance was calculated to excite curiosity, mingled with a certain dread of anything clothed and disguised like. He was a man of the people, dark, lithe and athletic in appearance. His name was Jacopo.

The voice of the recluse was unusually severe as she addressed him:

"In brother's name I say that 'a dog that will bring a bone will carry one,' Adrian of Palermo is my master, is he not, Jacopo?"

"Signora, I seem to be faithful to him, without doubt."

"Not so, Signora, 'Tis but a matter of service. I pay him his gold and I serve him faithfully for that, and more he cannot ask. He is a dog—I am an Italian. There is no necessity that he will not betray, and I poor child despised as I am, love Italian, and will never faithfully serve those who love her also."

"I am a man and a Sicilian, and I love the same chain upon thy fealty to truth."

"If I deny it, Jacopo; but the Adrian disgraces his name and his people."

The recluse paused.

"I will not deny, Jacopo," she presently said, "that you have brought me valuable service, and that has done the good cause rare service. But I will not be deceived. How farther, Jacopo?"

"A matter of greater moment than any that has ever before been, Signora."

"Name it, Jacopo."

The man looked suspiciously about him, as though fearful that others might be within hearing distance.

"Have no fear," said the recluse said, "Those even devices are happily not practiced here. Speak, and have listening again at Adrian's door."

Jacopo nodded.

Feeling of aversion crossed Fausting's mind as the man's eyes met hers, and she would have refused, but she restrained, but the cause for which she had called him to her was too great a strain for her to be fastidious; so, smothering her scruples, she bade the man proceed.

He shifted himself from one foot to the other, and said:

"Last night there came to Adrian's lodgings a cavalier most bravely dressed, one who had sought him before, and together they formed a deal which however will plunge all Italy into mourning."

"Ah, how so, Jacopo? What new enmity has the blundering ox?"

"A terrible one, Signora. One that cannot be suspected, can hardly be believed. Adrian ordered me to leave the room, and was shortly referred and heard the name of King Alfonso, of Prince Ferdinand—"

Jacopo lowered his voice, and drawing nearer to the recluse, he said, and she bent and listened eagerly:

"The Prince of Salerno, who came to Adrian wrapped him with French gold, and with many other promises, as the terrible thing—and he has preserved it. Prince Ferdinand is to be surprised, to be murdered in the streets by the hands of the Turks."

"Go on," she started, and put up her hand to defend the man's face.

"The council is to be called," she said. "How know they that the Prince is to be there?"

"They know it by a certainty, Signora. Adrian bears him no love; and then, too, the Necromancer of Monte Gargano, whom they say loves the Prince and the cause more than his own life—"

"Hold not slightly fear for it concerned a woman, and women, Signora, a great deal which I care not to trouble myself about. But it seems Adrian once loved a certain maiden, and nearly won her, when the Necromancer—"

"Aye, Signora, so many more. Adrian can no longer recall to Foggia! The people fear him. They know his practices, and they would rise against him, as they did in Rome and in Milan. He knows that he must go, and seek forth into open abuse, and he knows not where to go. But this strange Signor has given a safe retreat in France also under French gold, as well as revenge upon Prince Ferdinand and the Necromancer, besides one other reward."

"And is the other reward?"

"I did not rightly hear for it concerned a woman, and women, Signora, a great deal which I care not to trouble myself about. But it seems Adrian once loved a certain maiden, and nearly won her, when the Necro-

BIANCA STROZZI A PRISONER IN THE RETREAT OF THE BLANQUETTE.

mancer took her from him, and has since grappled her from him."

"Is she also promised to Adrian, if he will perform the deed these base hands?"

"Aye, Signora. The one who promised these things swore by knew where she was concealed, and he would reveal it. 'Twas that, he said, which made else this bandit fear to yield at once."

"Heard ye the name of this lost Sicilian maiden?"

"Janaita, Signora, if I mistake not."

"Janaita, Jasmita," Fausting murmured. "The name is not unfamiliar. I too am from Sicily, and will remember the place in which Adrian of Palermo is there held."

"Signora, I have performed your bidding. I have told you presently said, "then hast done well to come to me. Art thou willing to accept the promises given, and act as present only receive a fee? Or wouldst be an earnest of what will benefit to given thee?"

"Says, Signora, I came not here for gold or lower reward. I could not remain quietly at home. I must come to you. Yet I will not refuse the gold, Signora, for Adrian will presently leave me, and some others my little drop to buy of me now."

She drew from her bosom a well-filled purse, and emptied it into Jacopo's hand.

"Not all of this, Signora," he said, in surprise. "A half, or quarter will more than recompense."

"Say, take it all, Jacopo. It will be many days before I may see thee again. Come not hither any more until thou hearest from me. And nothing by coming at present. Stir up thy basket of wares, and if any one desires of thee what Fausting the recluse of Santa Barbarini, benefit to-day, tell them that she only purchased a few rare precious stones of the poor captives in San Gregoire."

"Signora, I obey," said Jacopo, and as he pocketed the gold selected therefrom the articles she named, and laid them down upon the table at which she sat.

"Jacopo, I am ill," she said, "and I am alone. Go to the nearest convent and bring me a sister. Quick, take it all, Jacopo. It will be many days before I may see thee again. Come not hither any more until thou hearest from me. And nothing by coming at present. Stir up thy basket of wares, and if any one desires of thee what Fausting the recluse of Santa Barbarini, benefit to-day, tell them that she only purchased a few rare precious stones of the poor captives in San Gregoire."

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result of his bold adventure, Gaspard's professed love was quickly turning to hatred. The woman whom he had at first detailed to wait upon the Signorita was supplanted by another, one whose husband was among those condemned with Filippo, and executed by the Marchese's order. Gaspard rightly conjectured that the vengeful security of this woman's care would be a fit prelude to the more rigorous revenge he was himself plotting.

In a corner of the camp the furthest removed from the chieftain's resting place, the captive Signorita lay tossing with fever upon a bed of forest leaves. Her beautiful hair was spread in a tangled mass upon her rude pillow, and the fitful rays of the fires gleamed upon a countenance distorted by pain, flushed with fever, and made fearful in expression by delirium.

As she lay alternately moaning with suffering and pleading for freedom, the attendant to whose care she had been assigned sat gloomily beside her, watching her writhings with an indifference which could only result from a depraved, unfeeling heart.

The woman's attention was equally divided between her sick charge and a sleeping infant lying in a rustic cradle at no great distance from her.

The Signorita moaned heavily and opened her eyes. The full black orbs of the Italian woman were bent upon her with ominous meaning. A ray of returning sense gleamed across the poor captive's mind; something in the woman's look recalled other scenes and other memories. Still keeping her eyes fixed upon the face before her, Bianca presently murmured, while she extended her hand toward her guardian:

"Thine is a familiar face. Have I not seen and known thee before?"

The woman took no notice of the feebly extended hand, neither did she reply to the sick girl's question.

"If thou hast ever been an acquaintance and friend, why wilt thou not assist me now?"

Still the woman made no reply.

Bianca continued:

"Surely if thou wert in peril, I would not let thee ask help of me in vain."

A bitter smile crept over the woman's face.

"There was a time when I might have asked help of thee in vain. There was a time when thou couldest have aided me and mine, for we were in a mortal strait; but instead of lifting voice or finger in our behalf, thou laughed and danced on, thou and thy proud mother and cruel father."

"When?" asked Bianca, in bewilderment. "When did I disregard any appeal for help? When did I ever see thee in want, and not give thee what was necessary—"

"Can gold buy back a life, Signorita? Dost thou remember Filippo and the men who were murdered with him?"

The angry light that burned in the woman's splendid eyes cleared the films from the captive's memory, and she remembered when and where she had seen her guardian before. She vividly remembered that day when she crossed the square of Foggia with her mother to visit Petrelli's shop; remembered the woman holding a child; remembered how her magnificent dark eyes had attracted her admiring attention, and how afterward the scowling glances she received from those eyes awakened in her heart a foreboding fear that was not easily lulled.

The Signorita said:

"Ah, I know thee now," and she closed her eyes wearily, as she thought how futile every effort would prove to melt her to pity.

The wom... ...st her hand into her bosom and drew forth a few gold pieces.

"Here is the gold thou gavest me," she said. "Take them back again, for they burn me while I possess them. Take them back again, I say. I would rather starve than quench hunger or thirst with the charity of a Strozzi."

Bianca shuddered as she thus comprehended the length and the breadth of the enmity that pursued her. She covered her face with her hands, and remained silent many moments.

A rustling beside her caused her to look up. It was only the woman, who had arisen, and was going toward the spot where Gaspard lay.

Bianca raised her head, and looked quickly about her. None of the banditti were near, save those fast locked in sleep. Could she not steal away from her rude couch? Could she not noiselessly gain the entrance to the camp, and, eluding the sentinels, make one more effort to escape?

She partly raised herself upon her elbow, but weakness threw her quickly back. A heavy sigh, a groan almost, escaped her.

"Oh!" she bitterly murmured. "Why am I bereft of the poor boon of strength when escape is almost within my reach? Only a few steps intervene between me and liberty, yet I have not the power to take them!"

Again she struggled to rise. Despair lent momentary vigor to her frame, and she had nearly gained her feet when a cry from the infant near attracted its mother's attention, and the captive's vengeful guardian returned.

Bianca sank back upon her bed, more feeble, more despairing than ever.

"What wast thou about to do, Signorita?" demanded the woman sternly. "Was escape in thy mind?"

She laughed loudly.

"Escape!" she cried. "Thou escape from the camp, when but this morning I looked to see thee die of weakness? How far thinkest thou thy feet could have carried thee? Hadst thou passed the sentinels yonder, the first rock against which thy feet stumbled would have sent thee reeling into the abyss below. Art thou in such haste for death, Signorita?"

Bianca opened her eyes.

"Aye, that am I," she replied.

"Have patience yet a little longer, *figlia*," the woman tauntingly rejoined. "The band moves to-morrow to another retreat. Our last adventure was too successful, and our enemies are assembling to take us. Wait until to-morrow, Signorita, and thy case will be disposed of for thee, for Gaspard will allow no sick and helpless ones to burden and task our movements."

The horror which filled the young girl's eyes provoked another brutal laugh from her inhuman keeper.

"'Tis like thy timid patrician temper," she sneeringly said. "One moment thou makest a boast that death is longed for, and when death is before thee thou wouldest fly from it with whirlwind speed."

"What is to be done with the sick and helpless?" asked Bianca feebly.

The woman shrugged her shoulders.

"Ask Gaspard," she said. "He bade me come and tell him when thy reason returned. Doubtless he will answer thy question himself."

Bianca pointed to the infant the woman had taken in her arms, and whose cries she was stilling with maternal solicitude.

"Is not thy infant helpless also? Will he be taken from thee because he is so?"

The woman glared wrathfully upon the questioner.

"As long as I share my strength with the babe, is it any of Gaspard's affair? I ask neither him nor his men to carry this burden for me, and when he is grown the duty will be returned. But is there any one in the camp who will do as much for thee?"

"Alas! no," said Bianca. "Yet let them leave me here," she added, hope again reviving in her breast. "I care not that I am left alone. I fear no solitude, and—"

"Verily 'twould be a pretty plan!" said another voice beside her, and looking fearfully up, she saw that Gaspard had approached.

"It would be a pretty plan!" he repeated. "If starvation did its work, thy decaying body would be a certain guide to our retreat; and if by hap or hazard thou couldest crawl away, thy prating tongue would soon send spies upon our track."

"I promise, I swear I will not," cried Bianca. "Oh, good Gaspard, only let me go free, only let me remain here when the band leaves this retreat, and I solemnly aver I will not breathe a word that would lead to thy surprise and capture. I will befriend thee instead, whenever I can do so, and thou shalt never find me an ingrate."

Gaspard sneered at the girl's words, and haughtily replied:

"A captive's promises are easily made, and easily broken. I would sooner trust a rope of sand than a woman's oath. No, Signorita; if thou wilt not be my bride, thou shalt be no other man's. If thou wilt not share my power as chief of the Abruzzo banditti, I will send thee to reign with Sathanas in his fiery kingdom below."

"What wilt thou do, Gaspard?"

"Thou'lt soon discover, Signorita. Thy father sent many a brave comrade the same way thou wilt travel, so the road is not a new one."

"Have mercy upon me, Gaspard! have mercy!"

"I know not the word."

"Pity me, good Gaspard! For the Virgin's sake, pity!"

The chief folded his arms, and looked coldly down upon the supplicant.

"Did the Strozzi have pity upon Filippo? Was he saved from the death he merited not?"

"Yes!" cried Bianca, springing upon her knees. "Filippo is not—"

A hissing sound, like the rush of forked lightning, and a noise like a thunder peal rent the air above them.

Bianca fell back upon her couch, pale, silent and insensible.

"Heaven punishes the falsehood before it is fairly uttered," said Gaspard, when he had himself recovered from the shock of the sudden peal.

A thunderbolt from a cloudless sky at noonday could not have caused greater consternation in the camp. Many of the banditti, startled from their slumber, started to their feet; while others, more heavily bound by weariness, partly raised themselves, and then, as the noise was not repeated, reclined again upon the ground.

Gaspard stood leaning against the rocky wall, near the Signorita's resting place.

Though cruel as the grave, courageous to foolhardiness, and boastful that nothing upon the earth, nor above it, nor beneath it, had power to frighten him, his breast nevertheless beat more quickly, and he watched for the Signorita's returning consciousness with more interest than he would acknowledge.

Inwardly he questioned himself regarding the strange phenomenon. What could it have been? It was not a thunderbolt that had struck the captive dumb and senseless, for no lightning either preceded or accompanied the sound.

"Petronella!"

The dark-eyed, black-browed woman looked up from her infant's breast, upon which she had bowed her face to hide her terror.

"What is it, Gaspard?"

"Did any light come with that sound, think you?"

"Nay, Gaspard. No light have I seen, save that which comes from yonder fires."

Gaspard shook himself, as though he would be rid of a foolish fancy that depressed him, despite his better judgment.

"What ails the Signorita?" he demanded. "Did my threat deprive her of life, or is it as I first surmised? Is she punished for the falsehood she was uttering when that fearful crash surprised us all?"

He bent over the girl, to look more closely at her pale, still face.

As he did so, darkness seemed to fall upon the camp.

He raised himself quickly, and looked toward the fires. Their light seemed gradually and slowly paling. They smouldered and flickered with uncertain intent; the vivid yellow flames, which before threw so bright a glow over the whole camp, assumed a paler, a feebler hue.

Gaspard opened his lips to call the men to replenish them with fresh fuel, but at that moment they again burst into a bright flame; yet an instant thereafter, with another loud report like the first, they were totally extinguished.

Immediately throughout the camp there was noise and confusion. Efforts were made to rekindle and replenish the fires, but every attempt failed. The same cause which had extinguished them prevented their being again started, and the confusion in the camp was made still more perplexing by darkness.

"Comrades!" cried an authoritative voice from a distant part of the amphitheatre. "Comrades, keep silent!"

It was Gaspard's voice, and his mandate was instantly obeyed.

"Comrades," he continued, "I know the meaning of this strange thing. Once before have I beheld a scene like this, and I know what it portends. Keep silent, for ere long stranger events will occur. Were the Necromancer of Urbino, or of Monte Gargano here—"

"The Necromancer of Monte Gargano is here," said a loud, deep voice, seeming to come from the centre of the camp. "The Necromancer of Monte Gargano is here. He is sent with a message to Gaspard, the chieftain of the Abruzzo."

Gaspard stepped forth from his retired position, and drew nearer the spot whence the voice came. The other banditti drew timidly back, for, superstitious as they were, they cared not to be identified with the scene they feared was now about to take place.

Following the direction of the sound, an unseen hand was presently laid upon Gaspard's arm, and a voice said in his ear:

"Halt, chieftain! Thou must come with me away from this spot, away from thy comrades, and away from this well-known haunt."

The chief drew back.

"Dost thou fear?"

"Gaspard knows no fear."

"Then follow me."

The moon, which had been riding low in the heavens, now showed her fair face over the rocky barrier which formed the wall upon one side of the retreat. By aid of this light, Gaspard could see the person by whom he was confronted; could see that he was a tall man, and a powerful one; could see that he was habited in a fashion that but few men of that age affected; could see, too, that the stranger's arm was raised, and that he pointed to the mountains beyond their resting place.

Still Gaspard hesitated.

"Why art thou reluctant?" demanded the mysterious visitor.

"Because I have enemies, and because I may be surprised," Gaspard frankly replied.

"Who led thee hither?"

"No one."

"How didst thou find our asylum?"

"I was directed hither."

"By whom?"

"By one who was once one with thee, but whom the judge's sentence has made a stranger among you."

"Whom mean you?"

"Filippo."

An awful silence followed the words.

Presently Gaspard resolutely said:

"Lead on, *Maestro*. I fear not to follow one whom Filippo hath sent."

"Thou mayest have as little fear as though I were Filippo's self," was the reply.

Guided and lighted by a pale light which seemed to play about the Necromancer and make him luminous, the two proceeded to the entrance of the amphitheatre.

The sentinel looked fearfully at them as they passed. The Necromancer inspired him and all who beheld him with awe, but upon Gaspard they looked as upon a doomed man whom they would never see return.

Perhaps in the pale light the chieftain saw and interpreted this look, and if he trembled not for his life, he trembled lest he should be supplanted during his absence, for before leaving the camp he turned and commanded his people to stir not abroad while he was gone, neither were they to admit friend or captive to their ranks.

"What commands wilt thou leave regarding the Signorita?" asked the Necromancer.

"What knowest thou of any Signorita here, *Maestro*?"

The Necromancer made an impatient movement.

"Do I not know all things?" he said. "Command thy people to treat the maiden well; bid them attend to every want and every wish, except that of giving her her freedom. Obey me in this, in Filippo's name."

The command thus given was quickly repeated, and to Petronella there was given an extra charge of kindness.

"Her life will be required at thy hands," said the Necromancer to the woman, as he turned away.

The cold night air of the mountains struck a chill even to Gaspard's hardened frame, as the two issued from the amphitheatre.

"Art thou cold, and thou a bandit chieftain?" asked the Necromancer.

Gaspard was abashed and inwardly angry with himself for the weakness, and his companion continued:

"The winds upon Monte Gargano are colder than those that blow through the valleys; even the people in yonder town feel them more keenly than we do here."

As he spoke he pointed to the little hamlet of Bovino, which seemed to rest like an eyrie upon the rocky heights far above their heads.

"True, *Maestro*," Gaspard replied; "but when one has lately slept the night winds chill him more easily."

"Thou hast not slept, Gaspard. Thy brain has been too full of wild thoughts for sleep to come at thy bidding. Beware, chieftain, lest the punishment for false speaking which thou fanciest overtook the captive Signorita should fall upon thee also."

"Then she was so punished, *Maestro*?"

"I have not said it," was the curt answer.

The bandit's fierce and haughty mood forsook him in the presence of his strange companion. Humbled, cowed and awe-struck, he followed him meekly as though he walked in the wake of a superior being, as indeed he believed he did.

Out into the wilds of the mountains the two went. Guided by the Necromancer, they left the beaten track through the valley and ascended paths that even Gaspard himself had never trod.

"Whither goest thou, *Maestro*?" he asked, as, after a toilsome ascent of many feet, they halted for a few moments to breathe and rest.

"To the heights beyond, Gaspard. We are called to-night upon a strange mission. I am sent to summon thee to a meeting with Filippo."

"Nay, not with Filippo surely, *Maestro*! Is not Filippo dead?"

"Well, and if he were, why should he not still summon thee? Knowest thou not that the dead sometimes commune with the living, and that they also at times unfold to them the decrees of Fate?"

"Yes, *Maestro*; but I fear that Filippo's message will be one of angry reproach. His death was a fearful one; it was an unjust one, and it has not yet been avenged."

"Of that we will speak further anon, Gaspard. Let it suffice us now to obey, whether Filippo shall speak with mildness or with reproach."

"As thou wilt, *Maestro*."

Again the two walked on in silence. The heights they were now ascending were more rugged than any they had yet passed. The trees and underbrush which had hitherto been so dense now became more sparse, and at length they emerged upon an open space where not a tree nor a shrub grew.

The night winds that had blown so briskly about them even in the valleys now seemed miraculously stilled, for scarcely a breath stirred to fan their cheeks.

Well-nigh overcome by the violent exercise they had undergone in making the ascent, both Necromancer and bandit readily halted to rest when they reached the glade.

In the dim light Gaspard could see that his companion's face had assumed a more serious expression than it had worn when first they met. His voice when he spoke was lower, and everything about the strange man betokened a scene of more than ordinary import.

Gaspard was unconsciously awed by everything that had transpired since their departure from the amphitheatre.

Bold, reckless and unscrupulous as he was, he could not now refrain from an apprehension that some unearthly manifestation was about to take place.

When they reached the centre of the space, the Necromancer left his companion for a moment, and retired by himself for a short time. When he returned, Gaspard perceived that the manner which had before impressed him as being so serious, and even fearful, was increased.

"Gaspard!"

"Yes, *Maestro*, I am here."

"Art thou willing to receive the message I was sent to summon thee to hear?"

"I am, *Maestro*."

"That is well. A mortal may not refuse to listen to words from another world. Hast thou any fears, Gaspard?"

"None, *Maestro*."

"Nor any doubts?"

"None."

"Nor any rebellious thoughts in thy mind?"

"None."

"Wilt thou listen?"

"Aye."

"And remember?"

"Aye."

"And obey?"

"Aye."

"Again I say thou answerest well."

The Necromancer took the bandit by the hand and led him a pace or two away from where he stood; then turned him in such a manner that his face would be toward the moon.

"Not until the disk of yonder planet sinks behind the hills beyond us, can we begin the spells and incantations which will bring Filippo to us."

"'Twill not be long we shall have to wait, *Maestro*. She rides swiftly toward her setting now, and in a few moments yonder high mountain will hide her from our view."

While they were thus waiting, the Necromancer took a branch of witch-hazel, and with this magic wand traced a circle upon the ground around the spot where Gaspard stood.

When this was completed, he traced a second and a third, still leaving Gaspard in the centre of these concentric rings.

The third was completed just as the moon sank below the rocky horizon, and its pale light gradually fading from the landscape, they were ere long left in profound darkness.

Then it was that the Necromancer left his position outside the last magic circle, and stepped within that where he had left Gaspard. A short distance from where the chieftain stood he knelt upon the ground.

The spot was barren, arid and dry. Not a twig nor a branch was before him, not even a blade of withered grass, yet the Necromancer breathed upon the spot, he murmured many strange words over it, and poured upon the earth a mystic fluid, when suddenly a flame sprang up which for brilliancy Gaspard had never seen equalled.

For a moment he held his hands before his eyes to temper the bright light, so he should not cry out with pain; but ere long becoming accustomed to the glare, he turned with increased attention to watch the movements of the Necromancer.

"Filippo may not come until Sathanas permits," said he, turning toward Gaspard, for an instant. "The imps who do their master's bidding are ever reluctant to leave their haunts. So be not dismayed at the means I may employ to compel them."

Again he knelt before the fire, and poured another liquid upon the flames. From a pale yellow they now turned to a bloody, deep-dyed red, hissing and seething as though with anger.

The Necromancer rose to his feet, and in a loud voice and in a strange tongue uttered commands whose solemn, though uncomprehended import impressed the outlaw as never the voice of man had done before. Often the name of the author of evil sounded upon his ear, and each time it was uttered it seemed as if the earth also heard it, and trembled.

Noxious odors now filled the air, for while he spoke, the Necromancer flung upon the fire divers drugs and powders of potent power.

"Why dost thou not come?" the magician angrily exclaimed. "Art thou more fearful of the mountains of the Abruzzo than of the crypts of Santi Apostoli? Come hither, I say, or by the power which I hold over thee I will cause thee to regret thy delay!"

The flames rose higher and more angrily as the words were spoken. They hissed and glimmered as though they were themselves ethereal beings, and resented thus the Necromancer's commands.

Again the magician drew near, and cast upon the flames stronger and more offensive drugs. The smoke they caused rose in a dense black column, seeming to connect the heavens and the earth with this ominous pillar.

Straining his eyes in the darkness which this last phenomenon caused, Gaspard could see that from out this sable pillar forked tongues of light were quickly thrust, and as quickly withdrawn. He could hear also the distant sound of thunder; the earth seemed unstable under his feet, and he feared he should fall to the ground.

"They come!" the magician softly cried. "They come!" and again he threw fresh drugs upon the earth.

The rolling thunder drew nearer. It increased to loud, angry peals and discordant crashes. Hisses that sounded in Gaspard's ears more fearfully than the loudest thunder were also heard, and in the midst of it all the Necromancer stood calm and erect, as though in truth he had command of the very elements, and as though the highest powers of the air obeyed him.

Suddenly the adjacent mountains became illuminated with iridescent light. It leaped from crag to crag, from rock to rock. Ever coming nearer and nearer, it at length reached the outermost of the three circles within which Gaspard and the magician stood.

Then it resolved itself into beings whose grotesque and horrible shapes filled the outlaw with shuddering horror.

"Come no nearer!" said the Necromancer. "Come no nearer, I charge thee; but remain where thou art, and listen to my commands."

The shapes obediently paused in their mad gyrations, and became so still that Gaspard could have fully noted their appearance, had he not been so overcome with terror that he turned his face aside, so he should not see their hideous countenances and still more hideous figures.

"Listen!" said the Necromancer. "I command ye to return in a trice to Hades and bring thence Filippo, who formerly dwelt among these mountains, and who quitted earth with a score or more of his companions. Obey! Go, and return more speedily than thought, or a punishment thou mayest well dread shall be thine."

A pause of only a moment succeeded. Then the noises became still louder; the sulphureous smells, which had filled Gaspard's nostrils almost to suffocation, became still more offensive, and the quaking of the earth increased.

A moment or two only did this continue, when the sounds suddenly ceased.

"Look!" cried the Necromancer.

Gaspard fearfully raised his eyes. The huge black pillar, which a moment before he had seen rising in such a dense mass from the earth with its forked tongues of fire, was gone, and in its place stood Filippo!

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

TELL HER SO.

BY FRANCES HENSHAW BADEN.

It was a face more childlike than womanly that turned from the mirror with an impatient little gesture, saying:

"What is the good of it? He don't care."

The beautiful face clouded, the sweet lips quivered and settled into a little pout for a few moments, as she stood at the window watching for somebody's coming.

The door opened. She forced to her lips a smile to greet her friend, who said:

"How very becomingly you are dressed, Bessie. William will fall in love anew when he sees his blue-eyed Bessie this afternoon."

Her lips quivered, as she turned aside to hide the tears which filled her eyes.

The quick eye of her friend detected the grieved look. Clasping her arms around her, she asked:

"What is it, Bessie? Cast the shadow from your brow, love."

"And over yours, Katy? No, no. 'Tis nothing. I'm only a little nervous. Let us talk of the opera. What shall you wear to-night?" Bessie said, trying to force a cheerful tone into her words.

Another moment and a quick step was heard in the hall, and soon after William Upton, Bessie's husband, entered. The little wife raised her eyes, not expectant, but a little hopeful, to his. She knew she was looking prettily. Would he tell her so, or notice it?

Nay, not even by a smile showing his pleasure, but the same greeting as ever.

"Hurry up dinner, Bessie."

She turned and left the room, but not without revealing to her friend the wounded spirit. Ah! that little quivering lip had told the story.

As the door closed, Kate Heartwell said:

"How very prettily Bessie is looking! Blue is very becoming to her. Is it not, Will.?"

William Upton raised his eyes from the paper he had opened, and said:

"Excuse me, coz. What did you say?"

"I declare, Will., you have eyes and ears only for some business matter. I said Bessie was looking beautiful. But, of course, I don't suppose *you* noticed it," Katy replied, in not a very amiable tone.

William smiled a little, and then said:

"How strange women are! When a man is doing everything to make money for them, they grumble; and when he don't exert himself to do so, they grumble the more. There is no pleasing them. Of course Bessie looks pretty. That is, I presume she does. I did not notice particularly just now. But she is *always* beautiful to me."

"Well, then, why don't you tell *her* so?" snapped Kate; adding, "I know *I* should like a little less indifference from my husband if I had one, even if at the cost of a considerable loss of finances."

"Oh, nonsense, Kate! Bess knows I think she is more lovely than any woman I know. I wouldn't have married her if I had not," said William.

"Then *tell* her so sometimes."

"I have, a hundred times."

"Since you married her?" asked Kate.

"No; what is the use of such nonsense now? Bess knows it well enough."

"Knows what you *used* to think, you mean. And I know just this: when I please a person, particularly those I am seeking to please, I want them to tell me so," Kate said, starting up, as the dinner bell was ringing, and following William to the dining-room.

Kate knew Bessie had spent most of the forenoon in the kitchen, superintending and preparing something Will. was fond of.

Kate, hoping to draw forth some word of commendation, said:

"Bessie, you will spoil me so completely while here, I shall never again relish any ordinarily good cooking. You prepare everything so nicely. And these lemon pies—no wonder Will. is so fond of them—they are the best I ever tasted."

Again the blue eyes were raised, half hopeful, to her husband's, and again came words from him that Kate would have liked to have had choke him.

"Is it necessary, Bessie, that you should cook the dinners? If your cook is not capable, get one that is."

A goblet pressed to her mouth hid the quivering lips; and Kate, fearing her wrath would explode, excused herself and left the table.

Will., absorbed in thoughts of business, never for a moment imagined that he had said anything to grieve Bessie or enrage Kate.

His dinner finished, Willie was hurrying off, when Bessie said:

"You won't forget the opera to-night, Will.?"

"Oh, no. Be all ready; I will be back in time."

She looked as if she wanted to say something more, and William said:

"What is it, Bess? Speak quickly. I must be off."

"Nothing," she said.

He hurried off. A sigh escaped Bessie's lips, and turning from the door, she said:

"How different! In by-gone days, so very different! I wanted to ask him to bring me some buds to wear to-night. But he does not care how I look; and why should I?"

She went wearily up stairs into Kate's room; and although she entered smiling to Kate—who had for weeks been watching the merry face growing first pensive, then sad—it was such a sickly little smile that, catching her in her arms, she said:

"Oh, don't mind it, darling. Will.'s heart is all right; only he has a dreadfully ugly way of showing it. He loves you dearly; but he does not think about those little acts which please us."

"Little acts! They are great, indeed everything to me! Oh, Kate, if he would only say sometimes such things as he used to say, I would give even years of life to hear them. Nay, Kate, if he loved me as he should, as I do him, more and more the longer we live, he would show it—would tell me so. What would it cost him to say those words my heart is perishing for—words so little to him, so mighty to me? No matter whether I look sick or well, no comments. The same way when I fix anything to please him. He has grown indifferent, to say the least. And, O Heaven, I dare not think what may follow!"

Kate tried to turn her friend's thoughts, knowing just then that all argument to convince her otherwise would be useless. She determined, at some opportune time, to have a long talk with Will. on the subject.

Very beautiful Bessie looked that night, and Kate, whose eyes so often rested with admiration on her, thought William would surely make some comment. How could he help it?

He came home in good time, and when he entered their dressing-room with an exquisite little bouquet of buds and blossoms, Bessie's heart gave a bound of joy as she stretched forth her hands, exclaiming:

"How beautiful!"

"Yes; Fulton sent them to Kate."

He could not fail to see the disappointed look on the face that had brightened and grown pale so quickly, and said:

"If I had thought of it, I would have brought you some. But Kate will divide; there are enough for both."

O men! O husbands! flowers are some of the beautiful things of life, and women like to receive them; but the little act which tells your love is life itself. As necessary as the blessed sunshine, the gentle showers of summer to flowers, are words and acts which tell your love to the woman who loves you, without which the heart will wither and die, not always waiting to perish with the casket which holds it.

Kate's determination to have a serious talk with William Upton was prevented by a sudden call home. Subsequently a severe affliction banished from her mind the thought of Bessie's unhappiness.

William Upton became every day more absorbed in money making, and Bessie grew so miserable in the belief that she had lost her husband's love, that, in mere desperation, she plunged into a whirlpool of gayety and fashionable dissipation. Young, beautiful, accomplished, she won admiration always. Looks and words denied by her husband were lavished bountifully by other men.

Whisperings were heard of her unhappiness, and found their way to ready and evil hearts. Fuel was cautiously added to the burning fire: hints of another occupying the heart for whose love she would have died.

On one occasion William's thoughts were drawn from the counting-room long enough to express his admiration, in a very decided manner, of a beautiful woman, the widow of an old friend. His remarks were heard by one who made good haste to use them—one whose devotion to Bessie was known by every one, save her husband. Skillfully this man used his weapon, pricking her deeply, wounding so surely that the sore and bleeding heart was ready to flee to any one offering sympathy.

She listened, orphaned and childless; no aged ones with wise counsel to direct her; no caressing baby's arms to twine around, and hold her firm against temptation.

Words for which she had been starving were poured into her ear. Taught to believe her husband false to her, she promised to flee from him to one who vowed such devotion.

"To-morrow night, Bessie, my beautiful bird, your cage door shall be opened, and you shall be free. You will come with me then?"

"To-morrow! God pity me! Yes, to-morrow I *will* be free!" she said; yet darted back, with a fierce look, pale and trembling, from the arms that would have embraced her, and with a bitter, moaning cry, sank, as the door closed, to the floor, repeating the words again and again:

"God pity—God help me!"

A little while, and William would come. Throwing herself down, she feigned sleep. Soon he came, bent over her, and drew softly back. With guarded steps, he sought his couch. Not long before she heard him breathing softly, and knew he slept.

One long, last look, and then farewell. She stooped, and strained her eyes to see by the dimly burning light the features once all the world to her, and even then "too dear," she thought. He was dreaming; murmuring in low, soft tones, "My beautiful darling!" Again, "I *do* love you." The face so sad and softened a moment before, grew hard and bitter then, as she said:

"He dreams of *her*!"

A few little things to gather up, and she was ready. With her hand on the door, she turned for one more look—drawing back in the shade as she saw him start up, and looking wildly round, call:

"Bessie! Bessie, love! Where are you? Heavens! what a fearful dream! Oh, there you are. Thank God! I thought I had lost you!"

She had dropped her hat and shawl, and stood before him with a look so intense and eager it was almost fierce, as she asked, in a thrilling voice:

"*Would you have cared?*"

"Cared! Why, what ails you, love?"

"Tell me!" she cried.

"More than to lose my own life, Bessie."

"Saved! saved! Not lost! No—no; found! saved!" she cried, and sank fainting in her husband's arms.

Pity and help from the mercy-seat had answered her cry.

The foiled tempter received the next day a little note, saying:

"I am free now from all doubts and misgivings, and blessed with my husband's perfect love, to whom my inmost heart has been revealed."

She saw him no more. Yes, she had told her husband all. And within his clasping arms she learned to know how truly and solely he loved her.

In after days Bessie's life was truly happy; And although she needed no further assurances of her husband's love, he gave them to her.

And once, in years after, when a young friend of William Upton's, recently married, was telling him how lovely his young wife was, William said, in a manner and tone that made a deep impression:

"My young friend, tell her so. Say to her what you have said to me. Tell her so often, and take my word for it, you will give her a balm to retain forever her beauty. There is no cosmetic like it. And in the far distant future, when time may have whitened her sunny hair, and dimmed the brightness of her eye, the heart which you have kept still young, pure and happy, will illume the faded beauty of her face, which will still be to you the loveliest on earth. And then—why, then *tell her so*."

CHRISTMAS BELLS AND HEAVEN'S BELLS.

BY WILLIAM ROSS WALLACE.

The Christmas bells have ceased their chimes,
From house to house they do not run;
From village to village the sound is gone,
From the tower and the steeple's curve,
In sacred mass or their ancient verse.
They toll of the wonderous birth
Of the Holy Child, while the Angels sing
Peace and good-will on the earth.

O the sacred picture the tale recalls!
O the music of heavenly chimes!
Of the Babe born in a manger-stall
Of the flame-rain and of the fiery ball
How the hate that burned for a whole year
Turned into love!

Into good-will in some hearts,
That a million waged with the rulers beat
Through the race of million morts!

The Christmas bells have ceased their chimes,
But the sweet music comes on air,
Through the realm that my hopes do make,
Through the peals that my hopes do wake,
Still in offering flame to the Babe that came,
Till upon the world and earth
A "welcome" rolled by an Angel fold
From God's everlasting birth.

A DARING GAME;

OR,

Neva's Three Lovers.

By MRS. HARRIET LAWES,

AUTHOR OF "THE HANDSOME STRANGER," "THE BEAUTIFUL HEIRESS," "THE MYSTERIOUS GUARDIAN," "THE OLD LIFE'S SHADOWS," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXI.

A SCENE IN INDIA.

Neva Wynde had married Harold, as will be remembered, upon the marriage night of Carrie Wynde, in that event, to the thorough jilt of her father and of his tragic fate in Indiana. All Carrie's fine, and ideagal of him had been simply scorning, pity and regret, resulting in the bestowal of her sympathy and love upon the one who had been so cruelly slighted by in her but with the noise of revolvers in the drawing-room and on the lawn, causing her fidelity to her ears, she had sobbed about at the thought that her father had been so soon forgotten, and that his friends and tenantry were so soon wearing over the marriage of his widow by a man unworthy to cross the threshold of his home.

And then having called upon Harold, and met, and in her sleep had dreamed that her father still lived, and that she saw him standing at the door of a hut among the far-off Indian hills, and that she heard his voice crying "Ostavia! Neva!" And then dreaming, she had awakened and wept and wept, to ask of herself if it was only a dream.

And then she had gone and had this dream-ed, since all the day and all the evening her mind had been fixed upon her father. It would linger and linger there, and not dreamed of him. Her dream had had the sharpness of a vision, but Neva was not insane, and although the slept no more that night, she never let fear with tempting sleep and wildly questioning eyes, for she knew that it was but a dream, and reasoned that she had born the victim of her own imagination, and that her dream was "only a dream."

But was it so? There is a philosophy in dreams which not the wisest of us can fathom. And although the cause of Neva's dream may be simply traced and plainly explained as the result of her agitated thoughts of her father during the night and most of the day, that of the world's wisdom, perhaps, and more of the world's ignorance, has not yet been explained. Such dreams, her in her sleep and so made unconscious, by the joy of her dream, for the joy of anticipated meeting?

Be this as it may, our story has to deal with events that, and then now to take a startling turn, perhaps not anticipated by the reader.

It was about one o'clock of the morning when Neva awakened from her dream.

It was about seven years since she bade us this brief adieu.

Among the cool shadows of the forests Himalayas as many country seats, or "bungalows," scattered at certain seasons of the year, and English merchants from Calcutta, with their families, and officers of the army, in charge of the sick, or convalescent from the effects of the unhealthy heats of the sea-coast or more fatal swamps of the interior, come to inhale the fresh air and consequent health, for which otherwise they would have to undertake an all tremendous expense, a voyage, home to the English or Irish land.

Those bungalows, for the most part, are built of wood, and are one story high, and are set and encircled with wide piazzas. The roofs, shingles, always roofed, and sometimes latticed, so the air and green leaves may have free access, cool and leafy arcade, which serves all the purposes of promenade, sitting-room, dining-room, dining-room, and even sleeping room, for there are usually doors enough to be scattered about, upon which the indolent resident takes his siesta, or afternoon nap.

To one of these bungalows, a large one for the rest, we will now direct the attention of the reader.

It stood upon an elevated plateau, with the tall mountains rested still more in the distances. It was surrounded at the distance of a few rod by a range of hills, and between it and them lay miles of forest, which was an impenetrable jungle, except where the narrow carpet of the bridle-path ran through it, belonging to the place.

The residence which we have thus briefly described belonged to a Major Archer, H. M. A., and it was under its roof that Neva Wynde had breathed his last. It was from its broad piazza that she had looked in India, rode away on a race, seeking to be a soldier's bride, and from which she had returned, tired the vigor of the night's ride, to her counter he was and to have perished.

At about two o'clock of the morning then, as we have said, and about the moment when Neva awakened from her dream, a native servant reclined lazily upon a bamboo couch in the piazza of the bungalow, and, apparently in a state of drowsiness, was smoking a cigar as he used. The cigar was stopped carelessly upon the lower part of his mouth, and was evidently an English paper, received that morning at the native servant, and indolently or smoking a cigar as he used.

The man was a sheer, stout, choleric man, with a warm heart and a ready temper. He had proved himself a brave fight. While, and still more brave, for he had so received the confidence of his master.

"Not much news by this mail," the Major muttered, as he withdrew his cigar and emitted a cloud of smoke from his pursed lips. "And no hope whatever of our regiment being ordered back to England. We shall get great hurt in this heathenish climate, while the favor regiments play the heroes at home in country towns at home. The good Brian of Lorn, the poetry a novel, distributed my heart.

He replaced his cigar and clapped his hands momentarily. A light-footed native, clad in loose white trousers and white turban, and having his copper-colored waist naked, gilded around his neck in the verandas and approached him with a salaam.

"Shebel," said the Major contemptuously.

The servant muttering, "Yes, Sahib," glided away as he had come.

The Major let fall his paper and rolled his head upon a bamboo rest, overlooking the scene. He had arisen hours before, had taken his usual morning ride to the house of a friend, his nearest neighbor, three miles distant, and had returned to breakfast with his wife and family, who were now occupied in one of the front rooms of the dwelling. The Major's duties for the day were now to be performed, and, having put down his newspaper, he sat upright in smoking, reading, sleeping and taking refreshments of light and cooling refreshments.

The shebel was presently brought in the Major on a crystal pitcher was served. He laid down his cigar and sipped the beverage with an air of enjoyment, yet lazily, as he did everything.

"I don't see how I should get along without you, Karrah," said the Major. "And you know it too you do. I pay you big wages as it is, and now I want to know how much more you will take, and forever your present position of steering. I think I'd better consult with my wife. She is up and dressed by this right and left. What do you say?"

The native, a slim, lithe, sinewy fellow, with oblong black eyes, full of slyness and wickedness, a mouth indicative of a cruel disposition, and with movements like a cat, grinned at the Major's speech, but did not say the change.

"Karrah," said the Major, after a pause, George Wynde's servant and nurse, then Sir Harold's attendant, and now Major Archer's most valued servant. He had made himself indispensable to the Major, and had proved his master's requirements, and by every fulfillment of them by his skill in concocting delicacies and other qualifications for the apparent devotion, and in other ways, fixing himself valued, in the very place where he was in that loosely ordered household, of rubbing his employer, and in the manner of a steady brain upon the Major's purse which the native servant well knew how to fill.

"Karrah," said the Major, "you have been good humored, very well and take to your counter

BUYING CROWN JEWELS.

BY MRS. N. C. ADDISON.

Flashing a them from the traveller's path,
Turning away a maiden's winsome smile,
Snubbing a hand fair and the needy soul,
Hiding from the sight of God and man,
I drove a hollow bargain with Sin,
Counting the dreams in the bitter cup;
Planning over flowers on a lonely grave,
Seeking a single soul to save,
Hearing the sighs of the suffering-die rain.
Watching to hear by the bed of death,
Heeding the orphan's plaintive cry,
Hoping the lame from sorrow's cry,
Ministering to set the lame free,
Binding up the wounds of a broken heart;
Counting Sin's reward a mere trifle,
Having reap the tale of shame,
Working to earn the bread we eat,
Climbing the hill with patience meek,
Bearing the cross with a willing heart,
Seeing Heaven's light in the darkest day,
Bidding the poor to the ample feast,
Treating with kindness the poor dumb beast;
Hoping for all things good and true,
Trusting in God the Father,
Loving true riches as we go,
Buying crown jewels as pure as snow.

WIDOW WOOD.

BY MARY KYLE DALLAS.

I don't say that brother Ben's is a widow wasn't good looking, for her age and her size. Then, she had a pretty good deal of money left her. She was always lucky in business. And she might have married well, if she wanted to change her condition; but, you see, Margaret Ann was a bit jealous-tempered, and Ben, poor fellow, he was so easy-going, who was only too glad to get a quiet life. I s'pose her brother-in-law, and if Ben had said to me, as he did, "Rich and, always be kind to Margaret Ann," I couldn't help seeing that. The fact of the matter is, that, as a general thing, widows do make fools of themselves oftenest things go.

In this case, I admit, she was the victim. She was left with a child on her hands. She was left by herself in a woman old enough to be his mother, for her money-bags. Sam was rich in the store. I was poor Ben's partner, I'd tried to buy the widow out. I'd said, over and over again, "Margaret Ann, you have plenty, and to spare; why not retire, Ben, and you, she would not. Ben had left the lion of the business to her, and she wouldn't drop it. She had the lion and the mouse, as you see, Sam Sweet.

That was why she took to sail about the store in her dead black silks; that was why she was always finding some excuse to hang down part of the stock to be had in hand, asking everything up, and giving him no end of trouble.

You see, I couldn't help it. The concern was mine, and I knew what owned just as much as I did. I'd said, "Margaret Ann, go home," she could have said, "I've a right here." That was it. She never waited on a customer. She never did anything but bother and pry. She had no children to occupy her, and she brought her pet white terrier with her, and he, he bounced, she said she was, in the big house opposite, and he wouldn't stay, she had to come on to the store.

Well, this went on for nearly a year. He even at times, and months, with especial I used to wonder whether old Ben knew how he had lost bargains. Maybe he knew he was sixty when he died, and a bald-headed, stoop-shouldered old man, and that a pair of black eyes, and a widow with her fresh color, and her pretty ways, and her money, and her child, and her dog, and her—I don't know what else—might be too much for him. He was my brother too. I hope it wasn't wicked of me to think of his mind to put an end to her capers, as he as man, went, and to tell him that it wasn't a proper place for a widow and what not, and that my family couldn't be expected to put up with it. But I'm glad I put the plain facts in form with Lilly; I knew that; but Margaret Ann had never seen her.

"Margaret Ann," says I one day, "we'll have a new widow. We need one, and she I've engaged her."

"Oh, do you, Margaret Ann," perhaps we have to be a young man, and good looking. Good looks attract custom."

"I'm glad you consider it so, for," says I, and I finished to myself, for I knew Margaret Ann would be in a fit if I told her what she was, "I've engaged her."

It was to be a surprise to her change when she saw Lilly behind the counter in my place. And I was glad of it, for, as a private office, I can see now, she had treated Lilly with scorn, and she didn't like Lilly's looks. I could laugh at her, poor, there; I had good reference with Lilly, and I had signed a written agreement with her for six months, and I was the master, you see, as I told you. Margaret Ann couldn't help it, and she had to put up with it. Lilly was as much above her as other that, and Sam Sweet was very happy as young blinds. I hope he'll be proposed to him before this time; I know he did in somewhere, and I know he was engaged.

"Look bless you," says I to myself, "and keep you from making her or her out cheap if I am a bachelor."

Well, you know, I found Margaret Ann walking like office in a towering rage, with her bonnet on.

"Benjamin," says she, "a woman is always right about another woman. Men admire a pretty face so that they are blinded by it. He was always so with Mr. Wood. Many a time he's thought a woman pretty and good when I knew she wasn't. I've proved that she was," as I've proved that she was not. I've proved that over Lilly Rathbone. She is exactly what I thought—exactly."

"Well, what is it?" says I.

"No better than she should be," says Margaret Ann. "I saw her kiss Sam Sweet before I had the counter this blessed morning."

"Well, I'm glad of it," says I, serious, and believed myself," says I.

"You know what men are," says she; "of course he kissed her first?" says I.

"Didn't he kiss her first?" says I.

"Well," says I, "I suppose you used to kiss Ben, when you were engaged, if not before."

"Well, that is no more to the point," says she, "than it is for Sam to kiss Lilly."

"Quite right," says I, "but they are engaged, Margaret Ann."

"Don't believe it," said she.

"It's pretty nearly settled," said I.

And there—well, I didn't tell it; it didn't seem to me that it was right for the woman turned out of the house on the Sam, she was an young man.

Sam was such a respectable sister. You dog-eared bottle" says she; and marched out, and I took a holiday more for a week, for which I was truly thankful.

Well, you know, it was all smiles and sunshine when I got back. Lilly was behind the counter as Sam, and she really did come out beautifully in a widow. Lilly took a great notion to her.

"What a nice, pleasant lady Mrs. Wood is," she said, as we were folding things up that night as I went my prying. I hope I'm not that sir; I ignore prying.

"Yes, you like her," said I.

"Dear me!" said she, crisp with her head under the counter.

"Sam likes you, you know," said I; "one of the family; it won't do to praise her too much."

"Oh," I wasn't thinking of what you said, Mr. Rathbone," says she, "I was thinking about my boy. I've seen I know it here. I left the door key with a nick in the handle and a piece of pink ribbon tied to it. I said I think where it is gone."

Well, we both looked every where. We unrolled packages and peeped into boxes, and poked down crooks in the floor. Lilly got so worried about, getting a backache, so I'd brought a chair for myself in it, and said Mrs. Rose was always so tired.

Rose was her sister. The two were orphans, and had been together in one little room of a respectable tenement house.

"Anything happened?" says I.

"Yes," says she, "I'm afraid so. I'm so worried."

"Dear me! Do mention the facts," says I.

"Why, my key—I've lost my key," says she.

"Ah! Well," says she, "perhaps there's another way out of it. Sam is very kind, and I'm sure he'll be glad to get you a new one."

"Nobody but Lilly Rathbone," says I.

"Oh, I'm sure I don't know who else."

"Why, of course not," says I